Chapter 2. The Yeltsin Era: Seizing Control

2. 1. August 1991-December 1991: Yeltsin Becomes the Leading Man

The Russian Federation became *de jure* independent on January 1st 1992. In reality, the declaration was a formality: since from the summer of 1991 Russia had been *de facto* independent. Richard Sakwa referred to the emergence of the Russian 'shadow state' within the larger Soviet construct that summer.[235] Leon Aron pursued this idea saying that:

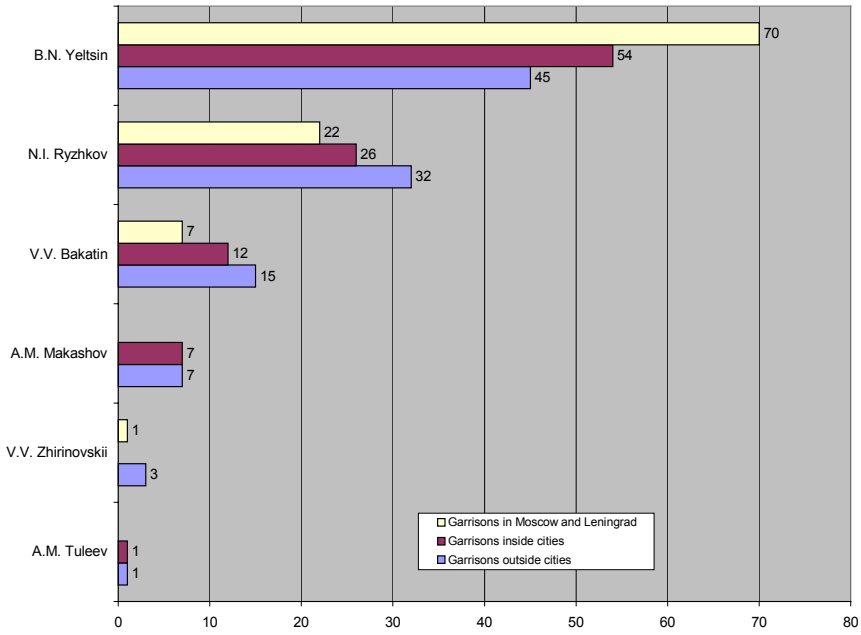
> "In his last three months in office, step by desperate step, Gorbachev retreated to positions he thought he could hold but eventually had to give up, settling for progressively smaller and smaller versions of the centre in an effort to preserve what towards the end became a mostly fictitious Union."[236]

During the latter part of 1991, Russian presidential power gradually overshadowed the Soviet institutions in terms of personality, political instinct, and both moral and electoral legitimacy. In terms of the personal rivalry between Yeltsin and Gorbachev, the popularity of the nonconformist and impulsive Russian president starkly contrasted with the indecisiveness and uncertainty of the former Soviet president.[237] From the moment he was elected chairman of the Presidium of the Russian Supreme Soviet (the Russian parliament) in May 1990, Yeltsin adopted an assertive Russian nationalist, populist, and anti-Communist course.[238] On his election as President of the Russian Federation, in June 1991, his political platform and agenda gained even greater momentum, reaching its climax during the August Coup two months later. Yeltsin demonstrated that he had great reserves of political will, an ability to make decisions and to take responsibility for crucial political actions and most importantly that he could operate in political ambiguity and confusion far more effectively than Gorbachev.

Yeltsin's increasing political weight in this period was reflected in his ability to gain the personal loyalty of the military establishment. Just as Gorbachev had done in 1987, Yeltsin co-opted, coerced, and manipulated the military elite, while building coalitions with them. The Russian nonconformist politician, for instance, could count on the military vote during the June 1991 Russian Presidential elections when he achieved a first round victory with 57.3 % of the vote. A survey among the military, depicted in the following graph, showed that 70 % of the Moscow and Leningrad garrisons [garnizony Moskvy i Leningrada] voted for him, 54 % of the garrisons in big cities [garnizony v gorodakh] and 45 % of those stationed outside the big cities [garnizony vne gorodov].

---

[235] Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, London: Routledge, 1993 (Second edition), p. 138.
[236] Leon Aron, *Boris Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life*, New York: St. Martins Press, 2000, p. 473.
[237] For a good account of this rivalry see for instance: John B. Dunlop, *The Rise of Russia and the Fall of the Soviet Empire*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, pp. 3-66 and 'Gorbachev or Yeltsin: the Lords of Misrule', *The Economist*, 16th April 1991, pp. 17-20.
[238] John Dunlop pointed out that 'In challenging Gorbachev and the center, Yeltsin for the first time embossed the dichotomy "Russia/USSR" upon the minds of contemporary Russians'. (See: John Dunlop, 'Russia: confronting a loss of empire', in: Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 52. As will be shown below, the military consequence of this stance was less obvious.



Graph 10: Military election behavior during 1991 Russian presidential elections

Source: adapted from S.S. Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsev, *Op. Cit.*, p. 181.

The substantial attention Yeltsin paid to the military forces apparently paid off during the elections. The *Economist* contemporaneously reflected on the fact that Yeltsin never lost sight of the military:

> "Mr. Yeltsin has caught the point. Unlike Mr. Gorbachev, who has been puzzlingly negligent in cultivating contacts with the army, he has been assiduous in his courtship. He goes out of his way to meet officers and men."[239]

Lilia Shevtsova, a distinguished observer of Russian politics, made the same comment:

> "Yeltsin now [August 1991] attempted to secure military support. He increased his contacts with the power ministries, especially with Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, who now joined Yeltsin's entourage. The president also made a point of visiting elite military units in the Moscow region, and he donned military gear in front of television cameras for the first time."[240]

In the months that followed the August Coup, Yeltsin progressively dominated the political arena. It was he - and not Gorbachev, the formal Commander in Chief of the Soviet Armed Forces – who orchestrated the personnel purges in the military. During the process that Aron called 'decommunization'(see Box 2), several top functionaries in the Soviet Ministry of Defense and the General Staff were replaced by generals who had been loyal to Yeltsin and, concomitantly, crucial key players during the coup attempt.[241] Marshal of Aviation Shaposhnikov was appointed as Minister of Defense, Army General Vladimir Lobov became Chief of the General Staff and Pavel Grachev was promoted to the rank of Colonel-General. The latter was also appointed to the post of

[239] 'Gorbachev or Yeltsin: the Lords of Misrule', *The Economist*, 16th April 1991, p.17.
[240] Lilia Shevtsova, Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia, Myths and Reality*, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, p. 81.
[241] Robert V. Barylski, *Op. Cit.*, p. 131-135 and Boris Yeltsin, *The Struggle for Russia*, New York: Times Books, 1994, p. 107.

Deputy Defense Minister of the Soviet armed forces and chairman of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) State Committee for Defense and Security.[242] These purges were the result of keen political instincts: Yeltsin built patronage relationships, which could be used in any possible scenario that the Union might encounter during this four month period. The personal relationships that he built with different generals served both the 'Union' and the 'Russian' options. For instance, the functions Grachev performed at both the Russian and the Soviet levels were, in practical terms, interchangeable.[243]

Box 1: The process of 'decommunization' in the Soviet Armed Forces

After the August coup Yeltsin implemented a process of 'decommunization' in Soviet society which essentially meant that he dismantled the triad that formed the foundation of the Soviet state, namely: the Party Bureaucracy; the secret police; and the propaganda machine (Leon Aron, *Boris Yeltsin: A Revolutionary Life*, New York: St. Martins Press, 2000, p. 473.). The armed forces also underwent this decommunization process as follows:

Gorbachev announced that eighty percent of the Ministry of Defense and General Staff would be dismissed after the August Coup. In reality about 30 generals were retired or replaced due to their involvement in the anti-Gorbachev conspiracy. The most important were: Marshal Dmitry Yazov (Minister of Defense), Army General Moiseev (Chief of the General Staff), Army General Konstantin Kochetov (First Deputy Defense Minister), Colonel General Nikolai Shlyaga (Chief of the MPA), Army General Valentin Varennikov (a Deputy Defense Minister), Colonel General Vladislav Achalov (a Deputy Minister of Defense for Emergency Operations), Colonel General Vladimir Denisov (Chief of the Main Operations Directorate of the General Staff), Army General Vladen Mikhailov Chief of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff), Army General Viktor Ermakov (Chief of the Main Personnel Directorate of the USSR Ministry of Defense) and Colonel General Boris Gromov (First Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs of the USSR). Marshal Sergei Akhromeev, a former Chief of the General Staff and senior aide of Gorbachev committed suicide after the coup's failure.

The personnel purges were limited only to the top brass of the armed forces. The soldiers and officers of the Army and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, whose tanks, machineguns and truncheons were so awesomely deployed by the losing side, were protected against persecution by Yeltsin's statement of 20th August 1991. In order to 'preclude the escalation of confrontation' and 'avert civil war', personnel who had been involved in the unlawful activities of the GKChP [Gosudarstvennyi Komitet po Chrezvychaynomu Polozheniyu-State Committee for the State of Emergency, (the leaders of the August 1991 putsch)] were not to be held responsible for the coup. The Moscow City Council also appealed to Muscovites to 'show wisdom and composure', to 'distinguish between the guilty top leadership and their subordinates and to refrain from any provocations against the armed forces' (See Leon Aron, Op. Cit.; p. 470) Indeed, the restraint on both sides is remarkable when it is considered that a survey taken among five hundred officers showed that 53% of the military supported the GKChP, while only a minority of 29% did not support the Putsch, and 18% had no opinion. (See: S.S. Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsov, *Op. Cit*., p. 200).

Personnel purges were not the only consequence of the August coup as Yeltsin now saw an open opportunity to get rid of the last vestiges of the Communist Party's remaining influence over the armed forces. The legitimacy of the Communist Party had already been severely damaged by the abolishment of the Soviet constitution's sixth paragraph. A commission, led by Konstantin A. Kochetov, was set up at that time to reform the Communist Party's organization in the armed forces. When it was clear that Kochetov himself had been involved in the August putsch another commission was founded to review the activities of the MPA in the Armed Forces. Yeltsin and Shaposhnikov gave this commission a new impetus by appointing Dimirti Volkogonov and Vladimir Lopatin to prominent roles.

All 92,500 members of the MPA, (called the 'All-Army Party Commission' from March 1991) passed a personal interview in which the political reliability of every individual was tested before a new job was eventually offered to them. (see: Robert V. Barylski, *Op. Cit*., p 136, Roger R. Reese*, The Soviet Military Experience*, London: Routledge, 2000, p.183; Colonel General Eduard A. Vorobyev in an interview: "Ne mogu skazat', na skol'ko protsentov nasha armiia segodnia-Rossiiskaia a na skol'ko-sovetskaia" unpublished document of the military union 'za voennuiu reformu') However, many officers of the former MPA stayed on in their posts as 'zampolit', but now received military-educational and social welfare duties instead of checking the political reliability of the commanding officers. For the sake of historical accuracy it must be stressed that Party control over the military professionals was most prominent in the period 1918-1942. (See for instance: Dale R. Herspring, 'Samuel Huntington and Communist Civil-Military Relations', *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol.. 25, No. 4, Summer 1999, pp. 557-577 and S.S.Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsov,

[242] The Committee for Defense and Security of the RSFSR should not be confused with the committee on the federal level that coexisted with it.

[243] See for an inside account Viktor Baranets, *El'tsin I ego generaly, zapiski polkovnika Genshaba*, [Yeltsin and his generals, remarks from a general staff colonel], Moskva: Kollektsiya Sovershenno Sekretno, 1998, pp. 167-172.

in their report on 'problemy yprazdneniia v vooryzhennych silakh SSSR voenno-polititseskikh organov I sozdaniia novykh struktur po rabote s litsnym sostavom' S.S.Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsov, *Op. Cit*., pp. 204-210)

Party control over the military was also a prominent task of the KGB, more precisely its Third Directorate 'Military Counter Intelligence' unit which closely watched the armed forces from the General Staff down to company level. This activity was stopped as a consequence of the reorganization of the KGB that followed the August Putsch. (See: Leon Aron, *Op. Cit*., p. 466-469.)

During the purges following the August coup, Yeltsin showed, in embryonic form, some of the characteristics that would become noted in more generalized forms throughout the 1992-1999 period. He controlled the commission (nominally led by General Kobets) that investigated the military's participation in the coup and during he also did not let the Russian parliament have much say in the wider public debate on this issue. In this way Yeltsin could purge the military of people who opposed his power and give his supporters a more prominent place in the high command. Politics based on patronage was already Yeltsin's hallmark before he obtained supreme power in 1992.

Despite this fact, Aron insisted on the fact that Yeltsin did not organize a witch hunt among the military, not even among the agents of the secret services. Aron acknowledges this as a positive element of Yeltsin's policy. In this way he avoided civil war (Aron, *Op. Cit*., pp. 467- 470). Other authors have not agreed on this last point because they have wanted to see the operations of the KGB examined by a court in the same way that the German government investigated the former East German Stasi and the South African government of national reconciliation investigated the South African secret services' activities during the Apartheid regime.

In conclusion, a man prepared to make radical decisions, ready to undertake sweeping actions and who kept in contact with the military apparently could convince the officer corps to support him, even if this possibly meant the end of the USSR.[244] Under these conditions, new opportunities and possibilities could occur for the military forces. The military elite's decision to support Yeltsin implied that the capacity to act, rather than purely 'moral' principles, guided their political choices at this time. The military's loyalty and support for Yeltsin - among other factors- would have important consequences for Russian history.

2. 2. 1992-1998: Institution Building in a Pyramidal Presidential Regime

The initial construction of the Russian State and all the subsequent political events related to it between 1992 and 1998 were indisputably personally linked to Yeltsin and his presidential function. Therefore, Yeltsin's personality, his political career and the evolution of the so-called 'presidential pyramidal system' were vital factors in the decision-making processes of the military sphere. Yeltsin's political system was the product of constant conflicts and crises, which continually bogged down Russian political life. Shevtsova claimed that only the year 1995 was politically 'calm', despite the ongoing Chechen War, while the remainder of Yeltsin's term was labeled 'turbulent, if not explosive'.[245] This observation can be affirmed when the process of institution building is examined. In simple and schematic terms, Russia underwent two periods in which new institutional bodies were energetically (re)constructed: namely the 1992-1993 and 1996-1997 periods.

The first period, 1992-1993, began with the establishment and the construction of the Russian state and ended with the settlement of the conflict between the President and Supreme Soviet in October 1993. The second period, 1996-1997, was related solely to the outcome of the 1996 presidential elections. It is no coincidence that these specific periods of institution building correspond with those during which Yeltsin was consolidating his position at the highest level of power and for that purpose, he had to create loyal institutions. Institution building was thus linked first and foremost with the consolidation of Yeltsin's power rather than concerns about efficiency.

[244] The popularity and the electoral success of President Vladimir Putin among the military, a decade later, can be explained on the same basis as Yeltsin's success in 1991.

[245] Shevtsova, *Yeltsin's Russia, Myths and Reality*, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, pp. 269-277.

These two periods were linked by an almost inhuman outburst of energy on the part of Yeltsin, while they alternated with periods of stagnation and immobility.[246] As the activity of institution building did not lie at the basis for efficient government, additional small - scale modifications – both in terms of formal organization and personnel appointments - were implemented. With these small corrections, institutional efficiency deteriorated instead of improving; and this inefficiency disintegrates further into lethargy. A vicious circle was created in which inefficient institutions and decision-making bodies were replaced with only more inefficient institutions.[247] The more Yeltsin used permanent personnel purges as a weapon to make institutions loyal to him, the more difficult it became to break this vicious circle. Political and organizational power games created inefficiency and it is exactly this 'vicious circle of inefficiency' together with the military's reactions to it that will be the subject of discussion of this next section.

Building on Ruins: the First Wave of Institution Building (1992-1993)

The dissolution of the USSR and the 'first round' of Russian institution building marked the period 1992-1993. In spite of this euphoric start for the new Federal State, new conflicts began and the struggle between the executive and the legislature dominated Russian politics during 1993, exemplifying this trend. It was only after this conflict was (forcefully) settled that the form Yeltsin's power would take was crystallized.

The Disintegration of the USSR and the Phenomenon of the Military's Nostalgia for the USSR. The Belovezhskiy agreement was not just the start of the process of disintegration of the USSR, it also created a great deal of confusion and instability in the military sphere.[248] There were basic reasons for this uncertainty. Firstly, the military aspect of the disintegration was initially not of great concern to the 'master minds' of the Belovezhskiy agreement. Military issues were discussed in only one article (and number six at that) of the agreement, and the article only provided the most general guidance for future military cooperation. In this vein, while Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber have both underlined the predominance of economic cooperation in the agreement, they have highlighted the lack of a comprehensive military annex.[249] Secondly, there was ambivalence in the 'plotters' attitudes. Some of the national leaders did not wholeheartedly opt for the Commonwealth and at the very least there were different opinions about the importance and weight

[246] All Kremlin watchers agree on the fact that Yeltsin suffered a deep psychological crisis after his 1993 'victory' over the Supreme Soviet and after his 1996 presidential election victory. Aron noted that 'The contrast between Yeltsin of crisis and the Yeltsin of stasis was reminiscent of the poles in the manic-depressive cycle ' (See Aron, *Op. Cit*., pp. 574) Indeed, in his 'manic' period, Yeltsin showed 'a huge store of energy' and an 'inexhaustible appetite for work' during which he issued many decrees and controlled the work of the government attentively. In his 'depressive' periods, he went through lapses of attention, apathy and self imposed isolation in which he was no longer in full control. Shevtsova used the terminology of 'Mr. Nowhere' for these specific moments of depression in Yeltsin's political career, which were known to insiders since 1987. (Shevtsova, *Op. Cit*. p.. 80) Yeltsin's bodyguard Alexander Korzhakov revealed in his memoirs that the Russian president even had several times tried to kill himself. (Alexander Korzhakov, *Boris Yeltsin, Ot rassveta do zakata*, Moskva: Interbuk, 1997) Besides this manic-depressive cycle, he suffered many physical afflictions for instance his back problems after his plane crash in Spain in Spring 1990 and the troubles with his heart since the summer of 1996. (Leon Aron, Op. Cit., p.572-578)

[247] The terminology of 'vicious circle' is borrowed and adapted from Crozier who described the phenomenon of three types of vicious circles in the bureaucratic organization. See: Michel Crozier, *Le phénomène bureaucratique* [The Bureaucratic Phenomenon], Paris: éditions du seuil, 1963, pp.247-257.

[248] The evolution of the CIS is further in this study not relevant. For a good overview of the political and military evolution of the CIS see: Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber, 'The Commonwealth of Independent States, 1991-1998: Stagnation and Survival, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.. 51, Nr. 3, 1999, pp. 379-415.

[249] Jacob Kipp, 'The Uncertain Future of the Soviet Military, From Coup to Commonwealth: The Antecedents of National Armies', *European Security Studies*, Vol. 1, Nr. 2, Summer 1992, pp.226-227. Richard Sakwa and Mark Webber, *Op. Cit*., p. 381.

of the national states in the CIS construct and its decision-making organs. Indeed, ambiguity was at the heart of the Commonwealth concept as national leaders sought to construct a political and practical platform to dismantle the Soviet construct whilst accommodating, to invert Gorbachev, the 'variable geometry' of the divergent national independence movements at their heart. In the military field, Russia, as the USSR's 'logical' heir or the so-called "continuer state" (Brian Davenport's term), initially opted for a centralized Commonwealth-wide military structure.[250] In comparison to some other Former Soviet Union states, Russia created its own national army very late in this period, and in fact it was one of the last CIS states to do so. Prominent advisors and collaborators in Yeltsin's entourage, such as Gennady Burbulis and Shaposhnikov, reputedly advocated the idea of the CIS personally to Yeltsin.[251] Ukraine and Belarus, however, laid much more emphasis on issues surrounding their national armies and the possibilities for independent decision-making in the CIS. These two countries revealed their eagerness to found national armies soon after the August coup in 1991.[252]

The demonstrable ignorance and ambivalence of the political elite, however, created much uncertainty among the military elite, who wrestled with moral, legal, practical and security considerations. For many military men it was not clear which country they were serving and to which authority they should pledge their oath. Thus military loyalty, a basic military virtue, was thoroughly questioned. Moreover, the disintegration of the USSR meant that the military forces were faced with a dilemma in which two basic traditional military values were at stake. On the one hand, military institutions are inherently connected with the idea of the state because the military ethos is basically a state ethos. On the other, the solidarity and the supremacy of the group is another basic value found in officer corps. The dissolution of the USSR forced the military to choose between the closedness and unity of the officer corps and the idea of the sovereign state. The dilemma may not be underestimated because the practical issue of who would pay the military forces was a foremost issue. Secondly, there were legal problems. The legal status of troops stationed abroad, such as the Russian troops in Moldova, the Caucasus, and the sovereignty of the Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine was unclear. Thirdly, serious logistical operations occurred which involved moving troops and material from Germany, Poland, Mongolia, Cuba and the Baltic States.[253] These logistical problems presented important practical questions for the troops who were camping with their families in tents and train wagons upon their arrival in their 'motherland'. Fourthly, there was a security problem. The future of the nuclear forces was unclear, although the fate of the nuclear arsenal was an early preoccupation of the CIS states. All these reasons contributed to a general feeling of loss and 'political disorientation', which developed sometimes into revanchist ideas among the Russian military. Public opinion results conducted among the military in 1990 illustrated this, showing that generally the forces were against the disintegration of the USSR:

---

[250] Brian A. Davenport, 'Civil-Military Relations in the Post-Soviet State: "Loose Coupling" Uncoupled?' *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 21, Nr. 2, Winter 1995, p. 183.

[251] It is for example not surprising to see that the political influence of Burbulis was waning after the Sixth Congress of People's Deputies in April 1992 after which effective steps were taken to establish the Russian Armed Forces.

[252] See for instance Adrian Karatnycky, 'The Ukrainian Factor', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, Nr. 3, Summer 1992, pp.334-372; and Jacob Kipp, *Op. Cit*., pp.217-219. Public opinion research had already insinuated before the break up of the USSR that the Ukrainian and Belorussian military were more willing to support the national army instead of the Union variant in comparison with the Russian military. In a survey on 'problems related with the functioning among multinational military personnel' [Problemy funktisionirovania mnogonatsional'nykh voinskikh kollektivov] taken among 3260 military of all ranks in the period January-August 1990, only 32% of the Russian respondents declared a preference for the idea of building national units, while 49% of the Belorussian and 51% of the Ukrainians said to endorse it. (see: S.S. Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsov, *Op. Cit*., p. 133.)

[253] See for instance: Viktor Baranets, *Genshtab bez Tain*, *(Pervaia Kniga)*, (Moskva: Politbiuro, 1999), pp.338-350 and the original view of discussing the military in a thematic number of the Dutch journal 'Oost-Europa verkenningen' concerning migration flows after the disintegration of the USSR. See: Christine Hoen, "Terug naar de basis, De terugtrekking van het Sovjetleger uit Centraal-Europa", *Oost-Europa Verkenningen*, Nr. 148, juni 1997, pp. 37-50.

Service and social demographic characteristics	In favour of preservation of USSR	Against preservation of USSR	No opinion
According to Service categories			
General Officers	74	15	1
Field Grade Officers	81	10	9
Praporshchiki (michmany)	67	20	13
Cadets	85	11	4
Conscripts	69	17	14
According to kind of Service			
Commanding	84	10	6
Political	94	4	2
Engineer - technical	61	22	17
Rear Service	89	9	2
Pedagogical	85	6	9
According to Party membership			
Member of KPSS	80	11	9
No member of KPSS	69	16	15
According to age			
younger than 20	71	16	13
21-30	69	17	14
31-40	80	12	8
41-50	80	12	8
older than 50	75	13	12
According to nationality			
Russian	72		16
Ukranian	76		10
Belorussian	74		11
Zakavkazia Republics	70		17
Centralasian Republics	85		7
Pribaltic Republics	51		37

Table 10: Military opinion on the future of the USSR military

Source: adapted from S.S. Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsev, *Op. Cit.*, p. 170.

A similar, but less pronounced, trend could be seen among civilians. Public opinion measured by VTsIOM in May 1990 among Russians, showed that 43% of the respondents supported the view that Russia should receive more political and economic independence (up to and including leaving the Union); 35 % favored greater economic and political rights for Russia but added that the final say in all questions should remain with the 'center'; and only 18% the respondents favored the status–quo, keeping the Soviet union intact.[254] Although comparison between the two polls are difficult to make, the difference between civilian and military opinion about the maintenance or decomposition of the USSR can be explained by and correlated with the feeling of loss and disorientation. The 'military syndrome' as Solov'ev and Obraztsov called it, had several consequences and influenced the political events in the post-1991 period. Firstly, the military, with the Minister of Defense Shaposhnikov as the leading instigator, persisted in their advocacy of unified armed forces: initially in the context of the USSR, and then – after the collapse of the USSR - in the context of intra-CIS cooperation. Secondly, this nostalgia for the Soviet Union even manifested itself in a desire for its re-establishment. Russian officers bluntly stated that they did not recognize the 1993 Russian Constitution because the USSR remained their fatherland, not the Russian Federation and they refused to swear the oath of allegiance to the Russian state, instead they declared to do whatever was in their power to re-establish the USSR.[255] This sentiment was reflected in the parliamentary elections of 1993 and 1995.[256] The Communist Party and nationalist

[254] John Dunlop, *Op. Cit.*, 1993, p. 62.
[255] Meeting with officers of the *voenkomat* in St.-Petersburg in May 1998.
[256] This view is been challenged by Deborah Yarsike Ball and Theodore P. Gerber who claimed that the alarmist views of Western and Russian observers that a retrograde dictatorship and revanchist aggression would emerge were

parties, the most conservative forces in favor of the preserving old Union, received the majority of their votes from the military electorate[257].

> "In that time [late 1991], the societal processes led to political disorientation in the conscience of the military servicemen. Many could not imagine what the goals and the consequences were of the economical and political course chosen by the leadership of the country. The internal and external political results of their policy were very negatively appreciated, and meant that they lost their faith in the ultimate success of reform. In this situation a part of the military service men stood open for populist rhetoric and political propositions formulated in an easy language. Some of them even stated that in such a difficult military-political situation and the passive attitude of the leadership the military had the right to take their own faith and that of the State in their hands."[258]

The 'First Round' of Russian Institution Building in the Defense Sphere. The new Russian Federation obviously required new institutions. These institutions can be divided into the executive and legislative branches, whereas the presidential institutions can be characterized as bridging offices between these two branches, or as 'coupling the uncoupled'. One should add that this gives a distorted view of the system because in reality Russian political structures were less clear and less stable than their labels suggested. The Yeltsin era was characterized by rapid personnel changes and institutional instability, thus this schematic view is purely theoretical. The exact power relations and the locus of the decision-making processes were never clear, which made institution building problematic.

As head of state, **the President** is the Supreme Commander in Chief of the Russian Armed Forces. From the August Coup onwards, Yeltsin tried to tighten his grip on the military elite because they could potentially challenge his supreme power. By neutralizing the risk of such interference, Yeltsin created what Regina Smyth called 'patronage-based institutions'.[259] In this concept, appointments of senior officers and key personnel into decision-making bodies are controlled by the 'patron'. In this manner a strong executive leadership can be created, by 'buying' loyalty and cooperation in exchange for promotion and opportunities. Yeltsin's actions followed this model to the letter.

Another important mechanism through which Yeltsin asserted control was **the Presidential Apparatus** (also called **the Presidential Administration**). Led by Sergei Filatov from January

---

overstated. Even if there would be a political will to re-establish the Soviet Union among the Russian officer corps, which the authors did not subscribe to, the Russian military would not be able to organize a 'conspiracy given the state of disintegration of the Russian army'. In fact, 'the Russian army' as an entity did not exist anymore. Anatol Lieven in his authoritative *Chechnya, Tombstone of Russian Power*, underscored this idea especially in the fifth chapter of the book 'Who Would Be A Soldier If You Could Work in a Bank?' elucidating the social and cultural roots of the Russian defeat. See: Deborah Yarsike Ball and Theodore P. Gerber, 'The Political Views of Russian Field Grade Officers', in: *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 12, Nr. 2, 1996, pp. 155-180 and Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya, Tombstone of Russian Power*, London: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 186-218.

[257] This may not be very surprising as Inglehart noted 'that relative low levels of diffuse satisfaction and trust make one more likely to reject the existing political system and support parties of the extreme Right or Left'. (See Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial society*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, p. 38. However, Voting behavior of the military in the 1990's can both be rooted in the economic/materialist situation of the military (the so-called 'scarcity hypothesis' in which the individual's priority reflects the socio-economic environment) as well as the socialization process in the military organization that breeds conservative values (the so-called 'socialization hypothesis') *ibid*. p. 68.

[258] Translated from: S.S.Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsov, *Op. Cit.*, p. 172.

[259] Regina Smyth, 'Power as patronage: Russian Parties and Russian Democracy', Webedition of Program on New Approaches to Russian Security *Policy Memo Series* (PONARS), Nr. 106, p. 2

1993 to January 1996.[260] The apparatus underwent constant reorganization but its main functions remained constant: to provide the president with vital necessary information; to perform analytical work; to provide policy options (and thus to solve problems); and to organize the public relations of the President.[261] Simply, the Presidential Apparatus represented the personal staff of the President. One agency in the Presidential Administration that was particularly important for the military establishment was the Commission on Higher Military Ranks which was responsible for the appointment of generals to key military positions. The proximity of the commission to the presidency and its closest agents inevitably led to the over-politicization of the selection and appointment of generals. Therefore, for Yeltsin the commission was an important lever of control over the military forces. Over time, Yeltsin was careful to place a 'trustee' at the head of this commission; or, in the absence of a trustee, he took the function on himself. Both actions reflected the tight control Yeltsin exercised over the military forces.

There was nothing particularly special about the administration of an institution that was a tool of the President were it not for the fact that it sometimes acted autonomously, in some cases taking its own initiative for its own purposes. It participated in the struggle for direct access to the President, which was the key to influencing his decision-making process. Two examples can be given. First, Viktor Baranets (formerly a *genshtab* colonel) reported that analysts from the presidential administration interfered constantly in discussions on military reform. As a result three parallel institutions (the Presidential Administration, the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff) worked independently on the subject without much communication between them. Baranets reported that in 1994 some 'Kremlin analysts' started to secretly invite General Staff *genshtab* officers to their own offices.[262] Secondly, in this race for presidential access the head of the Presidential Administration, Sergei Filatov found himself in a personal conflict with Alexander Korzhakov, who was in a privileged and trusted position as head of the presidential Security Service - responsible for the personal safety of Yeltsin. Korzhakov meddled in areas in which he had no authority, which included the oil trade and the politics of privatization.[263] This conflict was an example of the fierce struggle for access to the President, which not only raged between the institutions but also within the institutions themselves. The Presidential Apparatus became a perfect institution for co-opting people into the presidential circle with the result that it was soon too large and complex to remain efficient. Even Yeltsin himself sporadically showed his annoyance with the Presidential Administration and he described it as an inefficient and immobile bureaucracy. In November 1994, for example, Yeltsin ordered a reduction and streamlining of his staff when it was announced that the Presidential Apparatus had 3,200 employees and consisted of fifteen different administrations and departments.[264] In 1996, Yeltsin called for a reduction in the number of units from forty-three to nineteen and a twenty-percent cut in the number of employees.[265] The fact that this administration remained unreformed over the years showed how trivial and ineffective these announcements actually were.

Surveying Yeltsin's orchestration of the military hierarchy during his first years in office, Yeltsin favored military over civilian specialists when he appointed people to the politico-military sphere.

---

[260] The liberal Filatov was replaced by Nikolai Yegorov, the hard-line former minister of nationalities. Other key figures in the presidential administration were: Oleg Lobov, Viktor Ilyushin and Aleksandr Korzhakov, who systematically checked and controlled who made contact with the president and who did not. In this way they wielded enormous influence over policy.

[261] See: Stephen Larrabee and Theodore W. Karasik, *Foreign and Security Policy Decisionmaking Under Yeltsin*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1997, pp. 43-47; Richard Sakwa, *Op. Cit*., pp. 144-145.

[262] Viktor Baranets, *Genshtab bez Tain, Kniga Pervaia*, [The General Staff Without secrets, First Book] Moskva: Politburo, 1999, p. 364.

[263] Interview with Sergei Filatov, *Obshchaya Gazeta*, Nr. 38, September 21-27, 1995, pp.4-6

[264] Komsomolskaya Pravda, November 10, 1994, p.4

[265] "New Appointments" *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 1, 1996, p. 1.

This trend was apparent in several cases: but it was most evident in the creation and subsequent management of the **Russian Ministry of Defense**. In March 1992, after three months of fruitless efforts to bolster the CIS's military role and a concomitant utter vagueness about its role and legitimacy, Yeltsin decided to create the Russian national armed force of which Yeltsin was the interim Defense Minister. At the beginning of April 1992, Yeltsin installed a state commission 'for the Creation of a Ministry of Defense, Army and Navy of the Russian Federation'. This commission was led by Colonel-General Dmitri Volkogonov, who was assisted by four Deputy Chairmen, with specific individual tasks. These Deputy Chairmen included: General Pavel Grachev, who was responsible for operational matters, command and control structures; a civilian Andrei Kokoshin, who was responsible for the development of military doctrine, the procurement and welfare of servicemen; General Alexander Kobets, who was responsible for the relations between Russia and CIS; and General Yuri Skokov who was responsible for overall legislative problems and providing presidential advice on senior appointments. In May 1992 the Russian Armed Forces were inaugurated and two weeks later, after much speculation and a keen hope that a civilian Minister of Defense would be chosen, General Pavel Grachev was appointed the first Russian Minister of Defense.[266] Andrei Kokoshin, a civilian authority on military affairs whose reputation was based on his role in Arms Control debates throughout the 1980's, but disparagingly called a '*skazochnik'* [a story-teller] by Baranets, became the First Deputy Minister of Defense.[267]

One particular appointment in the Ministry of Defense was indicative of the contemporaneous policy practices in the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces, and also influenced the shape and the content of the reform debates for the next four years. The appointment of Colonel Gennadii Ivanov to the Ministry of Defense, a trustee and personal friend of Grachev, was a great surprise and scandalized many General Staff officers. Ivanov's appointment was possibly an attempt to neutralize the three more experienced and older members of the General Staff who posed a theoretical threat to Grachev himself: First Deputy Ministers of Defense Colonel-General Boris Gromov, Colonel-General Georgi Kondratyev and Colonel-General Valerii Mironov. Ivanov was quickly promoted to General after his appointment and led the new founded and prestigious directorate of 'Redeployment and Reform'. The directorate determined the reform debate throughout Grachev's tenure as Minister of Defense. Although Ivanov was 'the' ideologue of the idea of mobile forces, he had no technical staff experience and was seen by many General Staff officers as incompetent for such a high profile job. Ivanov's appointment demonstrated that favoritism was a hallmark of Grachev's appointment policy within the Ministry of Defense. In fact, the Minister of Defense, himself a product of such favoritism imitated the policy of executive patronage and personal ties within the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces. In this way Yeltsin was in turn faced by the ability of key actors to create their own web of patronage based on relations to secure their own interests. Moreover, the appointment of Ivanov also resulted in the centralization of the reform debate within the Ministry of Defense. Grachev and Ivanov monopolized the reform debate over the next four years without allowing the General Staff or other institutional involvement in discussions. This inevitably created a fierce bureaucratic struggle between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff over the issue of reform.

Again, Grachev imitated the policy practice of his Commander in Chief: Yeltsin also tried to centralize power to and within his office. In this sense, Baranets' complaint that *'kakaia vlast', takoi i ministr oborony'* [The Minister of Defense acts as his master] was accurate.[268] In other words, the

[266] Names that circulated as candidates for the post of Minister of Defense were: Shaposhnikov, Kobets, Galina Starovoitova and Andrei Kokoshin. The latter two were civilian and although they made part of the 'democratic' camp they survived on the highest political level until November 1998 when Galina Starovoitova was killed in what is most probably a political assassination and Kokoshin was dismissed by Yeltsin in the middle of 1999.

[267] Viktor Baranets, *El'tsin I ego generaly, zapsiki polkovnika genshaba*, Moskva: Kollektsiia Sovershennno sekretno, 1998, p. 197.

[268] *Ibid*., p.156.

creation of the presidential regime in the broader political context was duplicated in the High Command of the Armed Forces. In this way a political *matrioshka* was created in which political practice and power relations fitted into each other like nesting dolls. In these (unfavorable) conditions the Russian Ministry of Defense was established and began the immensely difficult job of creating a Russian military organization from scratch.

Three waves of appointments that took the rest of 1992 to complete concluded the formation of the High Command of the Russian Armed Forces. In this effort, the **General Staff**, and the **Branches of the Armed Forces and the Military Districts** were reformed and manned. In June 1992, seven important appointments were made public and Colonel General Mikhail Kolesnikov was assigned to the post of Chief of the General Staff. The Main Organization and Mobilization Directorate, as part of the General Staff, was especially important in two aspects of military reform: the decision-making process; and discussions about the AVF. The directorate was responsible for both the design of the military organization and the recruitment of personnel as its name suggested. In July-August 1992, a second wave of thirteen senior appointments was announced in which the four Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Services were announced. In October, in a third wave of appointments, the names of the new Military Districts Commanders' were made public. The reorganization of the Russian High Command in terms of both structure and personnel was so profound that the command only had a more or less stable form by 1995. Hence, the creation of the Ministry of Defense and its constituent institutions was drawn out over 1993 and its character was unstable and inefficient: as with the executive, the locus of power was ambiguous, the character incoherent (as a result of patronage relations), and the capacity for efficient decision making obstructed by the preeminence of the politics of patronage, or in other words, the primacy of patronage relations over institutional coherence. Grand and bureaucratic politics hamstrung the reform debate process and they did not create the environment for efficient debates.

Until 1993, when the conflict between the President and the Supreme Soviet was finally settled and the outcome affirmed by the new 1993 Constitution, **the Legislative Branch** had been composed of the 'Congress of Peoples' Deputies of the Russian Federation', which had the Supreme Soviet as its permanent body. This body was originally elected in March 1990 and was thus a clear remnant of the Soviet period. At that time, the Parliamentary Committee on Defense and State Security, presided over by Sergei Stepashin, was the instrument through which the legislature played a role in defense matters, but it was clear that Yeltsin did not tolerate any parliamentary influence over military affairs. Yeltsin's treatment of the parliament during the September 1991 purges illustrated this when he did not allow the parliament to overview the political counter measures against the August Coup. However, as formally stipulated in the Law on Defense of September 1992 (a basic law identifying the place of the armed forces in society and in the political landscape) the Parliament and the President had comparable powers and balanced each other's powers.[269] In reality, there was no counter-balancing effect. There were only two fields in which the Parliament could project itself and influence decision-making in military matters: over-viewing the draft of the Law on Defense and scrutinizing the Federal Defense Budget. This restricted parliamentary activity was also confirmed later in the 1993 Constitution and the May 1996 Law on Defense. Thus it was clear from the very beginning of the Yeltsin era that the Parliament was neither in a position to control the military executive, nor to influence the debate on armed forces reform or any other defense related issues. Besides the fact that Yeltsin would not tolerate any parliamentary control of

[269] Alla Kozlova, Gosudarstvennaia Duma I problema stanovleniia v Rossii demokraticheskoi sistemy grazhdanskogo kontrolia nad voennoi sferoi, in: A.G. Arbatov (Red.), *Razoruzhenie I Bezopasnost' 1999-2000, Rossia,: sreda bezopastnosti v kontse XX veka*, Moskva: Nauka, 2001, pp. 255.

or influence over military affairs, the State Duma possessed neither enough expertise to influence events or a staff which could do parliamentary research on defense matters.[270]

In May 1992, Yeltsin created **the Security Council** in order to preside personally over a think-tank and decision-making body, which had the input of both the executive and the legislative branch.[271] This body was potentially the main platform for coordinating and integrating national security policy and it came under the leadership of the executive secretary Yuri Skokov, a man who was closely linked to the military-industrial complex. In a certain sense, the Security Council can be compared with the Soviet Defense Council (a remnant of the Soviet Union) that was only finally abolished in March 1992. This apt comparison can also be seen in the Council being staffed with military personnel from the different power ministries over time, and who together, in this way, tried to influence its activities.

However, the responsibilities of the Security Council were always broadly–and therefore also vaguely, defined. It was created to help both the presidential and legislative bodies by providing recommendations and proposals on security related issues. But, the Security Council was a consultative rather than a decision-making body. Shevtsova noted that: "the Security Council was a consultative body without specified functions; it could make decisions only if the president wanted it to do so." Furthermore "the appearance of this new structure was another example of Yeltsin's efforts to rely on his own institutions, even if they did not have total legitimacy."[272] Others commented that although the composition, the missions and the functioning of the Security Council constantly evolved during the Yeltsin era it was *de facto a* body at the disposal of the president.[273]

Reviewing this first round of institution building, three remarks can be made. Firstly, the building of new institutions that would affect military organizational matters occurred with much hesitation and only after the failure of the original intention to organize the defense structure based on a CIS-wide model. Russia's defense decision-making system was thus a second choice, which led Michael Orr to make the following remark:

> "At the same time the re-birth of Russia did provide an opportunity to create new armed services which could appeal to Russian national sentiment and even act as a nation-building force. This opportunity was immediately wasted as the High Command fought to ensure that the Soviet Army survived the fall of the Soviet Union. That battle was lost when it became clear that the newly independent states were determined to create their own armed forces but the ministry of defense in

[270] *Ibid*., pp. 253-262.

[271] Much has been written about the Security Council. It demonstrates that many analysts consider this body as an important decision-making institution with functional precursors in the Soviet setting (the Soviet Defense Council) and other institutions as for instance the National Security Council in the United States. Ellen Jones and James H. Brusstar, 'Moscow's Emerging Security Decision-making System: The Role of the Security Council', *The Journal of Slavic Military studies*, Vol. 6, Nr. 3, September 1993, pp. 345-374. Jan S. Adams, 'The Russian National Security Council' P*roblems of Post-Communism*, January/ February 1996, pp. 35-42, Jan S. Adams 'Russia Security Council Profiled', *RFE/RL Research*, October 6, 1994, pp. 1-13; F. Stephen Larrabee and Theordore W. Karasik, *Foreign and Security Policy Decision-Making Under Yeltsin*, Santa Monica: Rand, 1997, pp. 35-41; Eberhard Schneider, 'Moscow's Decision for War in Chechenia (sic)', *German Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 46, Nr. 1, 1995, pp. 157-167.

[272] Lilia Shevtsova, *Op. Cit*., p. 47 and p. 186.

[273] Ellen Jones and James H. Brusstar, 'Moscow's Emerging Security Decision-making System: The Role of the Security Council', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 6, Nr. 3, September 1993, pp. 345-374. Jan S. Adams, 'The Russian National Security Council', *Problems of Post-Communism*, January/ February 1996, pp. 35-42, Jan S. Adams, 'Russia Security Council Profiled', *RFE/RL Research*, October 6, 1994, pp. 1-13; F. Stephen Larrabee and Theordore W. Karasik, *Foreign and Security Policy decision-making Under Yeltsin*, Santa Monica: Rand, 1997, pp. 35-41; Eberhard Schneider, 'Moscow's Decision for War in Chechenia (sic)', G*erman Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 46, Nr. 1, 1995, pp. 157-167.

> Moscow continued a grim defensive struggle to maintain as much of the Soviet military machine as possible. In the process they demonstrated the truth of the old principle of defensive warfare that he who tries to hold everything risks losing everything."[274]

Secondly, although the new institutions may have had a proper place in the process of democratic institution building and civil-military relations in the Russian Federation, many institutions were compromised by political developments during the last half-year of the Soviet Union's existence. Because of their questionable reliability, Yeltsin tried, beneath the surface, to make the Security Council an institution solely under his command. Yeltsin's looming disagreement with the Parliament also forced him to marginalize the parliamentary overview of the military. In other words, institutions were soon hollowed out by Yeltsin's political practice; a practice which consisted of putting 'annoying' or potentially threatening elements outside the game and bringing loyal followers into the inner circle. This inner circle, however, became smaller and smaller over time. Thus, the process of institution building was directed by Yeltsin's regime at the same time as alternative power structures were assembled: reflecting and illuminating one of the most important characteristics of his regime.

> "During his first term, Yeltsin failed to create a stable institutionalized framework for defense policy. Important decisions were made by a small circle of top officials, with no serious parliamentary oversight or public scrutiny. The lack of clear institutional lines of authority and overarching mechanisms to coordinate defense policy meant that defense policy often became a contest among rival factions who sought to appeal directly to Yeltsin over the heads of other bureaucratic actors."[275]

Thirdly, in terms of the military reform process, there were, in theory, several institutional agents and decision-making centers that could be involved in the reform debate. The General Staff, the Ministry of Defense, the Presidential Apparatus, the Security Council and even the Duma contained offices dealing with the reform issue. But the competition between the president and all these institutions made them impotent and turned them into competitors and rivals. In the end it was the Ministry of Defense, more precisely the Minister of Defense and his sidekick Ivanov, who won this competition: a victory which allowed them to monopolize the debate. But from an institutional point of view, it was clear that Yeltsin was only interested in political loyalty rather then bureaucratic efficiency. This particular political reality created negative conditions for military reform.

The Kremlin Against the White House and the Creation of a Super Presidential Regime. Political life in 1993 was dominated by the open conflict between President Yeltsin and the Supreme Soviet (or Parliament). It gained momentum when, at the end of September 1993, Yeltsin issued Decree No. 1400 'On the Stages of Constitutional Reform in the Russian Federation', and ended violently with direct tank fire on the White House in early October 1993. The conflict was essentially one between the executive and the legislative branch. Yeltsin, still immersed in the most frenetic period of political activity of his presidency during which he was trying to gain endorsement for and implementation of his reform ideas, did not allow much external interference from other elected

[274] Michael Orr, 'The Russian Armed Forces as a factor in Regional stability', in: Charles Dick and Anne Aldis (Editors), 'Central and Eastern Europe: Problems and Prospects', *Strategy and Combat Studies Institute*, Nr. 37, December 1998, p. 101.
[275] F. Stephen Larrabee and Theodore W. Karasik, *op. Cit*., p. viii. The same idea can be found in Robert H. Epperson, 'Russian Military Intervention in Politics 1991-1996', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 10, Nr. 3, September 1997, pp. 99-102.

branches of government. The legislature, however, claimed a vital democratic role for itself during a period when massive, radical, and traumatic reforms were being implemented.

To some extent the legislature's claim was legitimate. By direct extension of their democratic mandate, the Parliament asked the government to take into account the social aspects of their draconian economic reform plan. But it was also clear that the claims of the Supreme Soviet could be reduced to a bare power struggle in which no party wanted to give up the privileges accompanying their privileged position in society. Moreover, under the leadership of the speaker of the Supreme Soviet Ruslan Khasbulatov and vice-president Aleksandr Rutskoi, it was the parliament itself who called for an armed popular uprising against the President. The parties were apparently neither willing nor able to create consensus, an important characteristic of normative democratic societies.

The conflict between Yeltsin and leaders of the Supreme Soviet had far-reaching and immediate consequences for both political life and civil-military relations in Russia. A profound break with the immediate post-Soviet period occurred. After the crisis was settled in Yeltsin's favor, new players were brought into the political game, new power positions were determined and a new set of rules were established that would determine politics thereafter. After the violent clash of October 1993, the Congress of People's Deputies was dissolved. New elections were organized on 12 December 1993 and a new bicameral Federal Assembly was founded. It was created out of the Federation Council, (the Upper House) and the State Duma (the Lower House).

In addition, a referendum on a new constitution, drafted by Yeltsin's team, was organized. It established a super-presidential system in which the power of the president was immense and practically without external control.[276] The adoption of the 1993 Constitution formalized a new Russian State, and in this way, the independence declaration of January 1992 can be considered as a false start. Some kind of political stabilization had been created.

However, the cost of this rudimentary stability was high. The stabilization was only a fiction, as political antagonism had not disappeared. The success of the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky in the December 1993 parliamentary elections not only shocked the world, but also kept the relationship between the executive and the legislature tense for the years to come.[277] But besides the (falsely) stabilizing effect of Yeltsin's September-October revolution another aspect of political life must be highlighted. As a result of the failure of the economic reform plan and the related power struggles, Yeltsin became increasingly isolated politically. In particular, he became immensely unpopular in the public's eye. Liberals and other democrats even saw him as a traitor. The people who had made Yeltsin into the figure he was and in whom so much hope had been put, felt profoundly betrayed by their hero. Moreover, the Communists and (to a lesser extent) the nationalists were now his political rivals and remained so, from that point on. Consequently, Yeltsin's actions cumulatively underscored his political and, indeed, personal isolation.

The result was that Yeltsin –the former populist- became what Tatyana Tolstaya called 'Tsar Boris I' who ruled Russia far from the people behind the closed doors of the Kremlin. [278] Consequently, Russian political and economic life 'was turning into an unruly and spiteful struggle among lobby groups'. It did not go unnoticed that this and other factors were reminiscent of Russia's imperial tradition.

Within the Kremlin, the isolated president surrounded himself with a select and small circle of trustees. In 1994-1995 this 'inner circle' was composed of people who had their roots in the security

---

[276] See Lilia Shevtsova, *Op. Cit*., pp. 93-96 and Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, London: Routledge, 1993, (Second edition), pp. 53-61.

[277] See for instance: Peter Conradi, *Vladimir de Verschrikkelijke, Zjirinovski en de opmars van extreem-rechts in Rusland* [Mad Vlad, Vladimir Zhirinovsky & The Rise of Russian Nationalism], Antwerpen: Standaard Uitgeverij, 1995.

[278] Tatyana Tolstaya, 'Boris the First, The Struggle for Russia' *The New York Review of Books*, 23 June 1994, pp.24-27.

field and the armed forces: Aleksandr Korzhakov, Mikhail Barsukov (the Head of the Kremlin Security), Viktor Yerin (Minister of Internal Affairs), Pavel Borodin (the Head of the Presidential Administration), first deputy Oleg Soskovets, Pavel Grachev and Yeltsin's personal tennis coach Shamil Tarpishchev who literally controlled access to the president and *de facto* ruled the country. This group was later termed the 'Party of War' because it was the 'lobby group' that contributed to the outbreak of open war with Chechnya. The pyramidal presidential system, which fomented the emergence of the 'inner circle', not only took shape in the aftermath of the failure of Gaidar's shock therapy, but it also proved to have other dangerous aspects.

By this time, the military was no longer a neutral political observer. Only two years after the August coup, the military elite was forced to take sides in a divided political arena. Loyalty to Yeltsin now had severe consequences as military leaders had been forced to use violence against the members of parliament, a *prima facie* anti-democratic act. Different accounts of the crucial events of 3rd and 4th October 1993 show that the military forces were very reluctant supporters of Yeltsin.[279] Although Grachev's orders strengthened his position in Yeltsin's 'inner circle', the military organization did not unequivocally support the action. Nichols noted on this issue that:

> "…The October 1993 attack on the Russian parliament divided military loyalties, and forced many officers (who were suffering significant material deprivations under Yeltsin's reforms) to reconsider their role in Russian political life."[280]

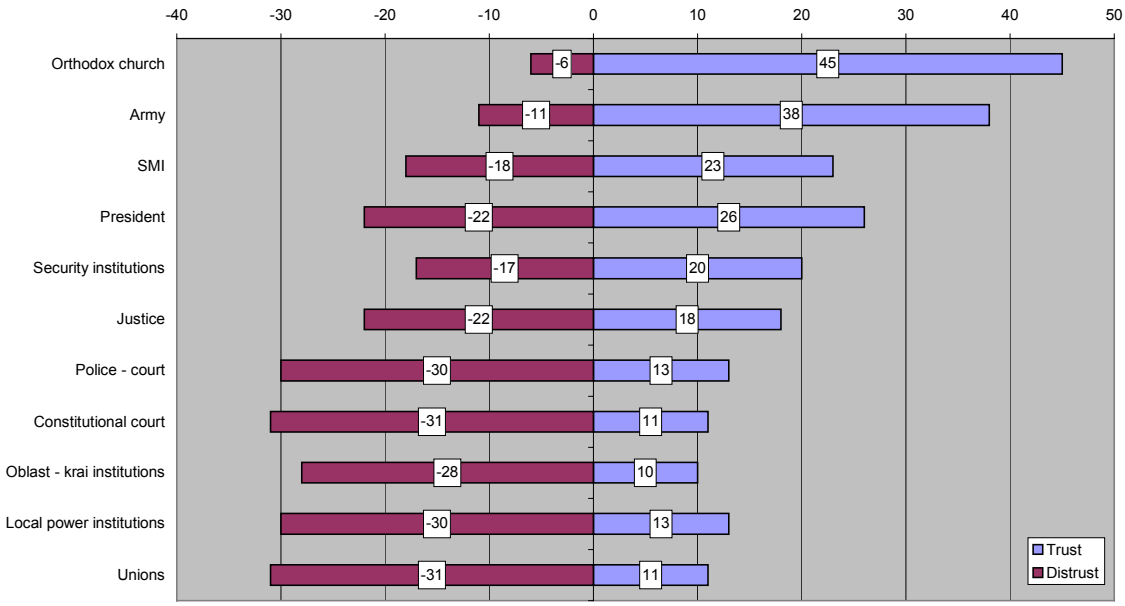
This division among the officer corps explains the subsequent 'electoral military mutiny' during the December parliamentary elections in which the military elite played an influential role in the aforementioned electoral success of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) as illustrated in Table 11.

Parties, presented to the voters on the party list	Parties that the civilian population of theRussian Federation voted for (in %)	Parties that the officer corps voted for (in %)	Parties that soldiers, during their military service voted for (in %)
Agrarian Party of Russia (APR)	8,96	0,8	5,5
"Yabloko" block	7,35	9,0	3,6
Russian Choice	15,74	19,9	27,3
Russian Democratic party	5,5	5,1	9,1
Russian Women	8,5	4,3	6,4
Communist Party (KPRF)	11,89	6,6	1,0
Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)	23,21	41,4	24,6
Party of Russian Unity and Accord (PRES)	6,66	2,3	9,1
RDDR	3,92	1,6	2,7
Ecological Movement "Kedr"	0,81	0,1	1,9
Other	2,05	1,8	2,2
Against every party	3,8	5,9	4,7

Table 11: The December 1993 parliamentary election results
Source: adapted from S.S. Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsev, *Op. Cit.*, p. 360.

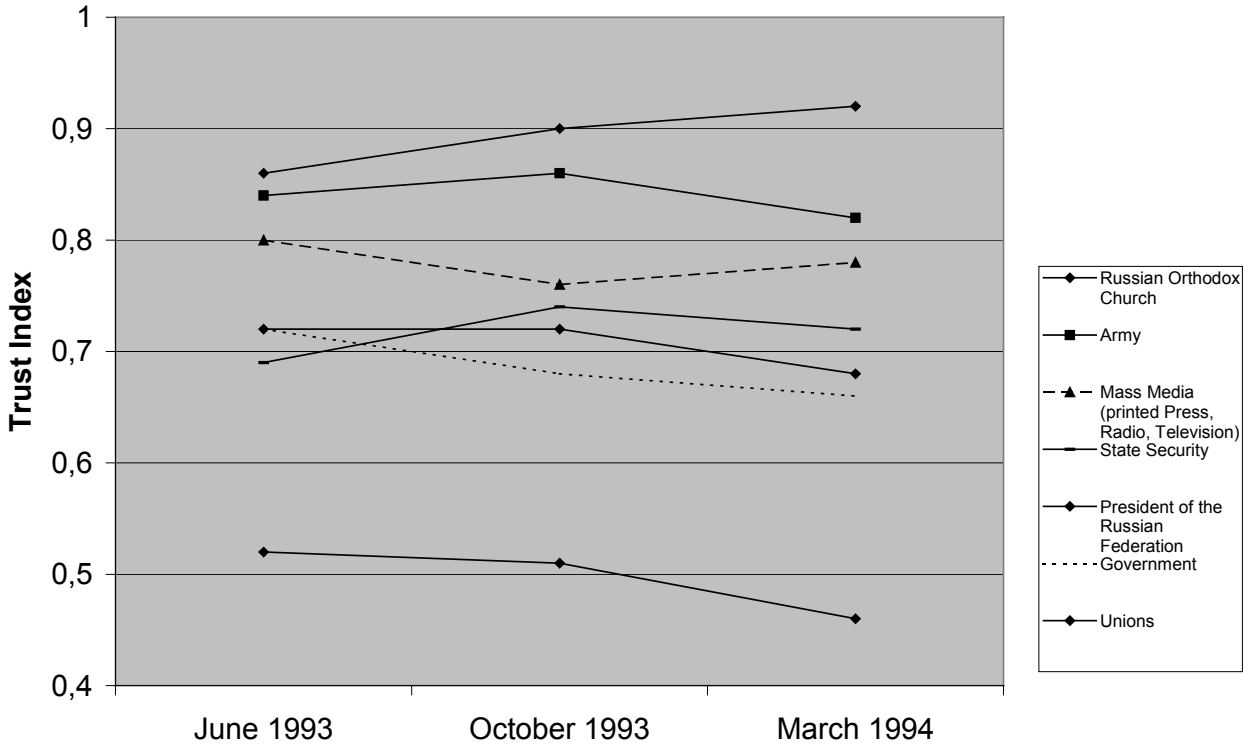
[279] Lilia Shevtsova, Op. Cit., pp. 86-87; Leon Aron, *Op. Cit*., pp. 540-543.
[280] Thomas M. Nichols, '"An Electoral Mutiny?" Zhirinovsky and the Russian Armed Forces', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 21, Nr. 3, Spring 1995, pp. 327-347.

Notwithstanding these sentiments, this trend had already been observed during the Gorbachev period and the Russian public's trust in the military forces as an institution was high. At the end of 1993, the Russian military establishment was the institution in which the Russian public had the most trust after the Russian Orthodox Church.



Graph 11: Survey on trust in Russian institutions (End 1993)
Source: adapted from S.S. Solov'ev and I.V. Obraztsev, *Op. Cit.*, p. 321.

This rather high faith in the military was confirmed in a civilian survey conducted by VTsIOM (*Vse-Rossiiskii tsentr Izucheniia Obshchestvennogo Mneniia*-The All-Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion). VTsIOM published the following graph in May-June 1994 which showed the evolution in trust in several Russian institutions in the period June 1993-March 1994. This period covered the open conflict between Yeltsin and the parliament.



Graph 12 Trust in social Institutions (VTsIOM)
Source: VTsIOM, 'Doverie k sotsialnym institutam', *Informatsionnyi Biulleten Monitor*, Nr. 3, Mai-Jiun 1994, p. 8.

These results had clear implications for Russian civil-military relations. Firstly, these indicators show that at the 1993 elections, rather than simply choosing a side in the President-Parliament conflict, the military opted instead for a 'third force'.[281] By skillful manipulation of the feelings produced by the 'military syndrome', Zhirinovsky made the LDPR a 'rational choice' for the military community. Secondly, the public's trust in the military was not shaken by the military's *prima facie* anti-democratic act against the parliament, nor for its nationalistic electoral preference. In spite of these factors, the military institution could still rely on a traditional pro-military bias of the Russian public.

The first round of state making was finished by the end of 1993, but Yeltsin was physically and psychologically marked by the political battles he fought and fell into a black hole of mental depression thereafter. Yeltsin's period of depression would endure until the beginning of 1996 thus the years 1994 and especially 1995 were, therefore, politically 'calm'. However, for a country in desperate need of reform, this also meant lethargy and stagnation. To make matters worse, the country experienced a bitter war between December 1994-July 1996.

The First Round of Institution Building Tested: The 1994-1996 Chechen War.

With the settlement of the political conflict between the legislature and executive at the end of 1993, a new conflict of a different type and even greater intensity surfaced, a conflict which defined Russia's post independence period and marked a generation. It was the conflict between the federal

[281] In explaining Zhirinovsky's victory in the December 1993 elections, Aron stated that '…the LDPR's success was a careful and deliberate positioning as a third force, distinct from both the restorationist Communist/Agrarians and the liberal-radicals of Russia's Choice'. (See Leon Aron, *Op. Cit*., pp. 558-561.)

center and the periphery; between Moscow and the federal republic of Chechnya.[282] Although this rivalry had its roots in the wars of the nineteenth century and the Stalin's deportation policies in the Caucasus, the immediate cause of 1994-1996 war lay in the aftermath of the 1991 coup.[283] Former Soviet aviation General Dzhokar Dudayev proclaimed the independence of the Chechen Republic in October 1991. The territory rapidly became a base for criminal activities and it was also an arms trading center. Furthermore, militants from the republic became involved in a conflict with neighboring Ingushetia and sent volunteers to fight in Abkhazia in Georgia. This act meant that the integrity of the Russian Federation was at stake and it was feared that domino effect would take place in which other republics would agitate for independence.

By 1994, Yeltsin, liberated from the acute political threat that the Duma had created for him for the previous two years, and, as a result of a new constitution that was stronger than ever, he could no longer afford to tolerate the Chechen's unilateral declaration of dependence. The success of the extreme nationalist LDPR in the 1993 elections also forced Yeltsin's hand. Ignoring this latent problem could have indicated to other regional leaders who had similar independence aspirations (such as Tartarstan, Bashkortostan and some Volga territories) that the Russian state could not prevent secession. Moreover, Russian sensitivity about the idea of territorial integrity may not be underestimated.[284] Baev has noted that the main characteristic of Russian military culture is that:

> "If there is any one issue capable of mobilizing the army for decisive action, it is a threat to the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation-and Chechnya, with all reservation about the real political aims of this war, may serve as a case in point."[285]

Therefore, after a year of threats from Moscow in reply to Dudayev's statements and the inability of either side to reach a political consensus, the lingering Caucasian conflict quickly evolved into open hostility and a full-scale war.

However, if moral judgement is suspended and human suffering treated as an abstract idea, war is first and foremost a test of a state's coherence. It was Charles Tilly, who stated that war makes the state, and the state can either come out stronger, or contrarily it can be completely weakened and exhausted by war. Therefore, the Chechen war can be seen as a test of the first round of institution building in Russia. Obviously, the newly created decision-making bodies and the military organization itself went through a hard time between 1994-1996. Two elements are worthwhile mentioning, the decision-making mechanism and the start of the war.

The acute crisis severely tested the newly built institutions of the Russian state - the Security Council, the Duma, the Presidential Administration and the elite group of Yeltsin's trustees in the Ministry of Defense. The manner in which decisions were made and the manner with which the authorities coped with the conflict were both crucial indicators of how the institutions would work

---

[282] The Russian-Chechen conflict, although it is a conflict which evolved into an outright violent war, is just one manifestation of a broader tendency in which several rivalries between the regions and the center in Russia existed. (See for instance Robert V. Barylski, *Op. Cit*., p. 300) Moreover, besides the economic, political rivalry between Moscow and the regions there were many 'hot spots' in and on the border of the Russian Federation which endangered National Unity. For an overview of the hot spots see Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, London: Sage, 1996, pp. 123-148. Moscow's concern about national unity is expressed in several official policy documents of the Russian State as for instance, the Security and Military Doctrines issued in 1992-1993, 1997, and 1999. The Chechen war as debated here must thus be seen as one example of a much broader underlying process in which the unity of the federal state was threatened.

[283] See for a very informative historical overview: John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya, roots of a separatists conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1998.

[284] See Dmitri Trenin's book on the idea of Eurasia for the impact of borders on military and politcial menatlity. Dmitri Trenin, *Op Cit*., 2001.

[285] Pavel Baev, *Op. Cit*., p. 25.

in the future. Secondly, the Chechen war had major effects on the military's prestige and status in Russian society. The historic esteem in which the armed forces were held and its emotive cultural symbolism within society were, albeit temporarily, severely shaken. This was remarkable given the public's general support for the military as a highly trustworthy institution. Latterly, both the institutional and the societal aspects of the war would significantly influence civil-military relations in general and the contents of the military reform discussion in particular. On this issue, Baev suggested that:

> "The War in Chechnya marked a crucial watershed in the development of democratic processes in Russia, particularly in military-civilian relations. This war was by no means a continuation of a consistent state-building policy: it was more the continuation of political squabbles and intrigues in Moscow."[286]

The Russian Army Fails the Test. The similarities between the strategy and circumstances of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and the Russian Chechen War were striking and the decision-making procedures and the outcome of the war were particularly so since they demonstrated the institutional and personal proclivity for aping Soviet forms of thought and action: an instinctive, in-bred action.[287]

Firstly, both wars started with a failed covert action quickly followed by an overt and full-scale operation of a 'limited contingent' [*Ogranichennyi Kontingent*]. These operations were failures because of the severe miscalculations that lay behind them. Enemy force capabilities were critically underestimated and overly optimistic predictions were concomitantly made about the outcome of the campaign. Grachev, for instance, predicted that the campaign's first active phase – with the objective of capturing Grozny and to seize control of the southern part of Chechnya - would only take one week. After two years of severe fighting, however, the Russian army was defeated and forced to retreat.[288]

Secondly, in both the Afghan and Chechen wars, it was not exactly clear who took the ultimate decision to invade the respective territories.[289] What is known *a posteriori* about both local wars is that the decision-making was conducted by a very small group of intimates and that

---

[286] *Ibid*. p. 24.

[287] The comparison between the Chechen war with other military actions is also possible. Lilia Shevtsova, for instance, made a comparison between Gorbachev's action in Lithuania in January 1991 with Yeltsin's action in Grozny. (Lilia Shevtsova, *Op. Cit*., pp. 111-112.) Robert V. Barylski makes a comparison between the way Yeltsin handled his conflict with the Russian Supreme Soviet and the way he handled the conflict in Chechnya. (Robert V. Barylski, *Op. Cit*., p. 300) These comparisons may result in general remarks about 'Soviet-Russian stabilization style'.

[288] Apparently, this strategy with deep roots in Soviet military thinking (see for instance Christopher Donnelly, *Op. Cit*., pp. 213-232) is still popular among ultra-conservative military thinkers. In 1996, for instance, retired lieutenant General Valeriy Dementyev and the military analyst Anton Surikov, two advisors of the president, the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense on military and security issues and both analysts related with the Institute for Defense Research (INOBIS, *Institut oboronnykh issledovanii*) in Kaliningrad wrote the following about operations of Mobile Forces: "In the first stage, aviation, special military intelligence (GRU) forces, and special Federal Security Services (FSB) and Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) groups carry out strikes for the purpose of destroying or seizing the most important enemy targets and eliminating the enemy's military and political leadership. Then Mobile Forces, with the support of the army and frontline aviation and naval forces, crush and eliminate enemy forces and take over their territory. After that, sub-units of Ground Forces and Internal Troops of the Ministry of Internal affairs, preferably with some combat experience, move in. They establish control of the most crucial locations and carry out "cleansing" of the territory. Then, with the help of militia formed out of the pro-Russian part of the local population, they establish control over the territory and ensure the elimination of nationalists and deportation of some categories of citizens from certain locations; It should be emphasized that until the end of the special operation, local authorities are needed only insofar as they are useful in supporting military control over the territory." (Ariel Cohen, 'Russian hard-liners' military doctrine: in their own words', *The Heritage Foundation*, Nr.104, 30 May 1996). As may be clear from the text, the importance of the first covert operation and the crucial idea of controlling territory are reflected in this passage.

[289]. The same obscurity exist about decisions on the military intervention in Vilnius, Baku and, more recently, the Russian airbone battalion's dash to Pristina airport during the Kosovo war in June 1999.

existing, formal structures of decision-making were either not involved or only formally consulted in the actual decision-making process once decisions had been taken.[290] The meeting of the Security Council which approved the use of force on Chechen territory (29th November 1994), was only called to formally approve a decision that had taken place elsewhere.[291] This 'formal' procedure was useful legally: the meeting of 29th November 1994 was used to prove the legality of a decision, which had actually taken place *in camera*. In this way, Yeltsin was exonerated by the Constitutional Court on 9th December 1999, even though the Russian parliament contested the legitimacy of the decision and presented a case against it.[292] Yeltsin used the decision taken by the Security Council as evidence of and justification for is government's allegedly ambiguous actions. Therefore his selective choice of an institution whose support he simultaneously needed to legitimize his actions and whose decision outcome he could guarantee in advance paralleled the well known practices of the Soviet era. This method of compromise was a 'standard procedure' of the Politburo at the end of the 1970's about which Gromov wrote in 1994:

> "Our country has its traditions. One of them is that the true meaning of a political action becomes only clear after the death of the politicians who pursued this policy. People do not like to make a display of their secrets. Therefore, I can say, that the true history of the decision-making about the sending of the 'limited contingent' to Afghanistan is only recently revealed."[293]

The 'democratic revolution' that separated the Afghan and the Chechen wars had not influenced the way decision-making occurred in Russia in the 1990's, nor had it altered the 'Soviet stabilization style'. Moreover, the obscure method of decision-making can be seen as another example, comparable with the Belovezhskiy agreement, of how crucial and important decisions in

---

[290] For the Afghan War see: Boris V. Gromov, *Ogranitjennii kontingent*, Moskva: Progress, 1994, p.17 and pp. 22-65. For the Chechen War see: Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, Houston: Texas University Press, 1999, pp. 53-70. Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya, Tombstone of Russian Power*, London: Yale University Press, 1998, pp. 102-108. Lilia Shevtsova, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 112-113.

[291] What is meant here is the small group of advisors and presidential trustees, also called 'the family', which thoroughly influenced Yeltsin's decisions. The family, however, was a heterogeneous group of ambitious individualists who fought each other to become as close as possible to the president. At the time of the decision-making of the Chechen invasion, 'an unprepossessing clique of hawks and bruisers, led by Alexander Korzhakov, head of the presidential guard' was active. They were seeking for a 'small, victorious war' to raise the President's rating. Yeltsin's view on the Russian military was completely distorted by 'the fertile imagination of his corrupt and lazy generals'. The advice of Sergei Stepashin, at that time head of the Russian Security Services, was also confused by personal intrigues. These factors led to a total misreading of Chechen military potential, a misreading responsible for the Russian intervention. (See, Robert Cottrell, "Chechnya: How Russia Lost", *The New York Review of Books*, webedition, 24 September 1998) Again, personal influence and intrigues seemed to be more influential in Russian decision-making process than institutional procedures. Another view was expressed by Eberhard Schneider. While he underlined the importance of the Security Council and the Presidential Administration in the decision-making process together with the non participation of the government and the Duma in this process, he saw a clear parallel with the CPSU decision-making procedure: "The decision-making process follows the example of the CPSU. The Security Council assumes the function of the Politburo and the presidential administration that of the committee apparatus. Both were/are not controlled by parliament, which, in the case of the USSR, was a parliament in name only which had no say anyway." Eberhard Schneider, 'Moscow's Decision for War in Chechenia (sic)', *German Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 46, Nr. 1, 1995, p.165.

[292] This means that the Russian State Duma was completely out of the game in the decision-making procedure. Although there were parliamentary initiatives to find solutions for the Caucasian conflict, it was a political reality that the parliament had little influence over the fundamental decisions of the President. In fact, Yeltsin could easily, according to the 1993 Constitution, ignore the parliament to endorse the policy of his own choice. Concerning parliamentary actions about the Chechen war, it was Sergei Yushenkov, the leader of the Defense and Security committee of the Duma and Ivan Rybkin, the speaker of the Duma, who were especially active on this subject (See: Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, *Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus*, New York: New York University Press, 1998.)

[293] Translated from: Boris Gromov, *Op. Cit.*, p. 18.

Russian politics were and still are made, in secret, behind the closed doors of the executive center: the Kremlin.

Finally, the Afghan and Chechen wars ended with traumatic military failure. Although the comparison between the two local conflicts is only an intellectual construct, it is interesting to see how Yeltsin not only mimicked the Afghan war *de facto* in the manner of the road to war, he also imitated the manner in which it was prepared and conducted, as well as the trauma of the exit of Afghanistan, as if the Russian elite had not learned anything from the war in Afghanistan.

This failure was very surprising because in 1994, the *Afghansty* (the term used for the Afghan war veterans who rebelled against the Soviet military 'gerontocracy' between 1989-1991) conducted the Chechen war themselves. It was a deep irony that people who would have been expected to have learnt from their own experiences had apparently not done so.[294] Structure could affect intention. However, the context in which people find themselves acting in a particular political reality, is a reality which is being inevitably organized in a different way to its antecedents, which in turn means that making 'rational' presumptions about people's behavior in order to understand their political actions and decisions is less beneficial than to make an analysis of the 'actor in the structure'. Here, Yeltsin's construct, 'the super presidential system', running throughout the eponymous Yeltsin era like a continuous thread, bore a great responsibility for the decision-making structure and the ensuing consequences of the time.

During the Chechen war the Russian military leadership underwent additional traumas in three different fields. Firstly, there was a deep feeling of professional humiliation. Notwithstanding six years of debate about military reform which included a debate about local wars, the manner in which the military fought the war showed that they were apparently not ready for conducting such a war as professionals. Reform had apparently had no effect on the skills or performance of the armed forces normally associated with basic professional competence. Moreover, the war's trauma was so profound that there was neither a stimulus nor impetus for a new round of reform.[295] The Russian troops' consistent tactical blunders during campaigns were striking, and their ensuing losses were extremely high. The initial assault on Grozny in January 1995, the handling of the two hostage crises in Budennovsk (June 1995) and Pervomaisk (January 1996) serve as dramatic landmarks of their failure.

Moreover, in January 1995, a confidential list of dreadful lessons learned from the initial phase of the war written by General Eduard A. Vorobyev was made public by the press. This exposed to the public the military's malaise. Vorobyev's conclusions were subpoenaed by a Russian Duma Commission led by Stanislav Govoruchin which was researching the causes of the war and its results.[296] In sum, all the reports that evaluated the military's performance gave a bleak picture of the military's professionalism. This made their humiliation complete.

---

[294] To set things straight, the *Afghansty* were not a unified group of people. Baev noted that the lessons the *Afghansty* learned from Afghanistan were far from clear cut and chaired by all officers. For some, the 'warriors', the responsibility of the Afghan failure lay with the political (-military) elite and decision makers who betrayed the military. Grachev was one of this group. Other officers, the 'peaceniks', said that there was no military solution for an Afghanistan problem. Gromov was, according to Baev. a representative of this group. (Baev, *Op. Cit*., p. 22). The same evaluation, as shown later, is to be found among the 'Chechentsy', the veterans of the Chechen war.

[295] This does not mean that the military did not understand or did not acknowledge the internal organizational problems. The Russian military failure is in no way an expression of the intellectual capabilities of the Russian military. On the contrary, the Russian military were certainly able to evaluate their own campaign. Mid-level cadres were even openly criticizing their military superiors and their own institution. But again, a distinction must be made a difference between the intellectual analysis of the problem and the implementation of practical solutions. It is a question of standing intellectually outside the system or acting within the system.

[296] Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, *Op. Cit*., pp. 57-58, pp. 69-70 and pp. 81-85. For Western, purely military evaluations see for instance: Raymond C. Finch III, 'Why the Russian Military Failed in Chechnya', as mentioned in: Timothy L. Thomas, 'The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat', *Parameters*, Summer 1999, pp. 87-102. Timothy L. Thomas wrote a serial article about military performance in Chechnya under the title 'The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya': Timothy L. Thomas, 'The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya. Part I:

Secondly, there was a deep feeling of betrayal among the soldiers. The rank and file of the military felt betrayed by their own superiors, especially by the Minister of Defense and the President in his capacity as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. Officers on the front line felt that they did not receive enough mental and material support from their superiors. According to their assessments they had been sent to war for purely political reasons. When Alexander Lebed ultimately forged and completed a peace plan the military did not unequivocally support it. Lebed's action was seen by many as a part of a 'dirty' political game in which 'one of them' now participated. In their view, a military victory had been close in June 1996 but was taken away from them by Lebed's peace effort.[297] Moreover, the public discontent and disapproval of the war fuelled the military's sense of betrayal.

Closely connected with this element of discontent was a third factor which had a traumatic effect on the military. The military elite, except for some hard-liners and political opportunists, only fought the Chechen campaign reluctantly. For some generals, such as Major-General Ivan Babichev, the assault was unconstitutional. But the military elite again faced a dilemma in which professional arguments stood against moral arguments. On the one hand, they were supposed to obey orders; on the other, the war was a war against their own countrymen. In turn, the Chechen war once again posed the military with a moral dilemma and demonstrated that the military's ranks were not sealed off from the domestic political developments around them. With its combat failings, internal dissent, and politicization, the Russian armed forces were rift with discord, a cumulative sclerosis.

In conclusion, Russian politics in this period did not stand the democratic test of transparent decision-making and the military organization did not stand the professional test of conducting a war effectively. And yet the political system, as Yeltsin had constructed it, endured! Key players remained in their posts and the political law that '*voiny i revolutsii vsegda meniali elity'* [wars and revolutions always change elites] did not come true. As the presidential elections of 1996 would show, the 'Yeltsin system' – and the powers behind - proved too strong to be put aside by the humiliating Chechen experience.

The Chechen War: Public Opinion and Presidential Elections. Between 1994-1496, there appeared a third player in the political game, which influenced the agenda of Yeltsin. Civil society, namely the press and non-governmental human rights organizations had made a most prominent stand against the war. They did *de facto* force Yeltsin to make some fundamental decisions, which proves his sensitivity to the *vox populis*. One of issues the president touched upon was the idea of the professional army. Thus, once again, the public forum brought this military theme back onto the

---

Military-Political Aspects, 11-31 December 1994', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 8, Nr.2, June 1995, pp. 233-256; Timothy L. Thomas, 'The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya. Part II: Military Activities, 11-31 December 1994', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol.. 8, Nr.2, June 1995, pp. 257-290 and Timothy L. Thomas, 'The Russian Armed Forces Confront Chechnya. Part III: the Battle of Grozny, 1-26 January 1995', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol.. 10, Nr.1, March 1997, pp. 50-108. Andrei Raevsky, 'Russian Military Performance in Chechnya: An Initial Evaluation', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 8, Nr.4, December 1995, pp. 681-690. For a more comprehensive, political military evaluation the most authoritative studies are: Stases Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, Houston: Texas University Press, 1999; Anatol Lieven, *Chechnya, Tombstone of Russian Power*, London: Yale University Press, 1998; Carlotta Gall and Thomas de Waal, C*hechnya, A Small Victorious War*, London: Macmillan, 1997; For a more historical introduction on the conflict John B. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[297] I heard this argument several times during conversations with military officers and it was publicly confirmed by General Pulikovsky in August 1999 when he proclaimed that the generals would not allow the politicians to steal their military victory during the second Chechen war. During the Second Chechen War, this frustration was vented several times by elite soldiers, as Patrick Cockburn discovered at a military funeral in the Pskov region, the home of the 76th Airborne Division: he related a soldier's opinion that "…the feeling after the first Chechen War was that we were betrayed. All the soldiers and most of the civilians here believed we could have defeated the separatists" Patrick Cockburn, "Russians tight lipped over Chechnya losses", *The Independent*, 19th March 2000.

agenda, just as it had during the 1989-1990 period. The raw and hyper-realistic way that Russian television brought events in Grozny, Budennovsk and the Chechen mountains into Russian homes was appalling. Although the Russian public is accustomed to violent television images, the horror and cruelty of the war was repugnant. Moreover, the human rights organizations, of which the 'Soldiers Mothers' and 'Memorial' were the most prominent, enjoyed freedom of movement and expression during the war and they fully exploited this political freedom. The Soldiers' Mothers even surrealistically went to the frontline to discuss the fate of their sons with military commanders. The actions and criticisms of both actors were so overwhelming that they intensively influenced society's attitude towards the war.

The Russian public's widespread disdain of the conflict and the concomitant severe impact of the war on the social position and outlook of the Armed forces were evident in a number of quarters. Viktor Serebriannikov has published the following table in his book *Sociology of War* [*sotsiologiia voiny*] which clearly showed that trust in the military took a severe blow after the Chechen war began in December 1994.

Year	*Trust*	*No trust*	*No opinion*
1992 (second half)	55-60	12	28-33
1993 (end of the year)	48-53	18-20	27-34
1994 (July)	38	28	34
1994 (31 December)	35,1	40,3	24,6
1995 (1 march)	~31	50	~20
1997 (January)	29	52	19

Table 12: Trust in the Military and the Chechen War

Source: V.V. Serebriannikov, *Sotsiologiia voiny*, Moskva: Nautchnyi Mir, 1997, p. 152.

The number of people who continued to trust the armed forces during these years halved, while the number of those who mistrusted them quadrupled. As shown above, the contentious events of the 1991 August coup, the 1993 October uprising and the media campaign against the military from 1987 onwards had together never created as much distrust of the army as the 1994-1996 Chechen war did alone. A second remarkable element of the sudden mistrust was that the militaries debate about its role apparently affected the whole population. This conclusion can be derived from the fact that the group holding 'no opinion' about their trust in the military became smaller over time, while most respondents pronounced an increase in the negative opinions that they held about the war. Subsequently attitudes about the Russian armed forces were once again polarized in Russian society.

The public not only gradually lost trust in the military forces as an institution, but it was also bluntly against sending troops into the dissident republic. Anatol Lieven noted that a public opinion poll conducted between 16th –20th December 1994, (before the full scale invasion) showed that 36% wanted a peaceful solution, 23% were for an immediate withdrawal of the Russian troops from the north Caucasus region, while only 30% of the respondents favored 'decisive measures' to restore order in Chechnya.[298]

A public opinion poll in *Moskovski Novosti* taken just after it was clear that the covert operation against the Chechen government had failed showed that by then 65% of the Russian population was against Russian troops marching into Chechnya.[299] In March 1996 more than half (54%) of the Russian population supported the withdrawal from Chechnya, while only 27% supported the continuation of the war.[300] Notwithstanding this general disapproval of the campaign,

[298] Anatol Lieven, *Op. Cit*., p. 196.
[299] *Moskovski Novosti*, 29 January-5 February 1995, p. 4.
[300] Anatol Lieven, *Op. Cit*., pp. 196-197. There was one moment during the whole Chechen campaign where public support was increasing, namely in the aftermath of the hostage taking in Budennovsk. This hostage taking was viewed

it did not gather sufficient momentum to mobilize mass demonstration on the streets. Therefore, the political apathy and disappointment within the democratic movement was very high.

More importantly, Yeltsin's popularity, which after 1992 was never very high, dramatically fell at that time, 63 % of the respondents were against Yeltsin's policy in Chechnya and only 8% favored it. Political analysts evaluated *post factum* that the Chechen war was Yeltsin's most serious mistake. For a President who was determined to be re-elected, such rapidly declining popularity was alarming. Yeltsin, who was regularly shown to be sensitive to mass public agitation during his reign, actually reacted to public criticism in his presidential re-election campaign. He anxiously sought a way out of the Chechen war, and as a result military reform, most particularly the AVF, became a key element of his election campaign. Thus public disillusion with the war, with the military and with Yeltsin himself became factored into the executive's calculations about re-election strategies and concomitantly manifested itself in terms of the executive's public agenda for and the imperative of military reform. These factors shaped the future public and private debate.

Although Shevtsova and Olcott acknowledged that the Russian human rights lobby was small and fragmented and the Russian mass media was financially dependent on oligarchs who used them to push their respective political agendas, they credited both the activists and the media for their roles in forcing the government and the President to modify its policy during the Chechen war.[301] After the war, Sergei Kovalev, the well known human rights activists wrote:

> "The war was won by those few dozen, and only a few dozen, non-government organizations all across the country - the Soldiers' Mothers and Memorial, among others - which from the first day raised their voices against the meat grinder. They were seen and heard by only a small percentage of citizens. But among these citizens were several hundred or so-just a few hundred-who demonstrated and picketed day after day, month after month. Their conviction made an impression on our 'silent majority'. This is our arithmetic. The war was won by freedom of speech. By several dozen honest journalists-just a few dozen-who continued to describe the truth about Chechnya to hundreds of thousands of readers and tens of millions of television viewers, despite pressure from the government…In 1996, the more perceptive politicians seeking office understood that the country would support anyone who didn't promise to stop the bloodshed. The "hawks" had no future. It was at this moment that Yeltsin made several highly public moves toward peaceful settlement of the conflict. It was exactly then that Lebed, a man not entirely devoid of political instinct, it seems, beckoned to the voters with the promise of immediate peace. Those voters who didn't believe Yeltsin believed Lebed…This in fact is democracy at work: society has mechanisms with which it can force."[302]

Indeed, the logic of elections - that is the race for the voters' will - combined with freedom of speech, influenced Yeltsin's agenda during 1996 and it definitely influenced the military reform debate thereafter. While the Chechen war can be seen as a very negative element of his tenure,

---

by most Russians as a terrorist act. In parallel with the mobilization force the concept of territory has in Russian military culture, the fear and mobilization power of terrorist among the Russian population may not be underestimated. This observation is supported by events in September 1999, where nighttime explosions in Moscow and Volgodonsk that killed more then 200 people were crucial for installing a public opinion in favor of a re-launching of a full scale war in Chechnya.

[301] Shevtsova and Olcott , *Op. Cit*., pp. 6-8. See also Shevtsova, *Op. Cit.,* pp. 166-167.

[302] Sergei Kovalev, 'Russia after Chechnya', *The New York Review of Books*, 17 July 1997. In a second follow-up article, Kovalev had to review some of his optimistic thoughts with the beginning of the Second Chechen War. See Sergei Kovalov, 'Putin's War', *The New York Review of Books*, 10 February 2000.

Yeltsin must be credited with guaranteeing that scheduled elections took place and also protecting freedom of speech.

Contradictorily, however, the policies of pursuing war and ensuring freedom of speech – perhaps characteristic of Yeltsin's impulsive personality – cancelled each other out. This last observation can be seen as exemplary of Russia's stagnation in the 1990's. This stagnation, however, was interrupted one last time by an outburst of energy and a political *tour de force* from Yeltsin which led to his surprising victory in the race for a second term in the Kremlin, however, the political price that Yeltsin paid was high.

Building on Ruins: the Second Wave of Institution Building (1996-1997)

Political analysts were amazed that Yeltsin was re-elected. In early 1996 even people in Yeltsin's inner circle doubted his election chances. Rumors existed that Korzhakov - who was not afraid of anti-constitutional proposals - wanted to postpone the elections. The results of the elections, however, proved once more that both Yeltsin's abilities as a politician and his physical strength had been underestimated.

Nevertheless, in early 1996 objective facts underscored the view that Yeltsin was not nor could become a 'new' man. At the end of October 1995, Yeltsin fell unconscious and suffered a heart attack. From that moment on rumors and speculation about his health and ability to govern gained a life of their own. The Communist opposition gained a clear victory in the Duma elections of December 1995. As the most fervent and organized opponents of Yeltsin's regime, Yeltsin suffered a major political defeat. Moreover, the nationalist LDPR, the other political opponents of the President came second. Although Yeltsin did not have a party of his own, the party closest to him, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's 'Our Home is Russia' (NDR), only came third. Fourthly, in January 1996 Yeltsin found himself in only fourth place in the opinion polls behind the Communist Zyuganov, the liberal Yavlinsky, the nationalist Zhirinovsky, and the 'strongman' candidate of the Congress of Russian Communities (KRO), Alexander Lebed. While Zyuganov could count on 21% of the likely presidential votes, Yeltsin could only rely on 8%. The other three candidates had about 10% each: Yavlinsky 11%, Zhirinovsky 11% and Lebed 10%.[303] Finally, the Chechen war became a real threat to his political career. As a result, these facts cumulatively made it hard for political analysts to believe that Yeltsin could plausibly win the elections.

When Yeltsin launched his presidential campaign in spring 1996 his survival instinct was stronger then ever. He started with a dramatic gesture: he fired an unpopular member of the government. Andrei Kozyrev, the Western minded Minister of Foreign Affairs, was his victim. This was not surprising given the fact that even liberals saw him as a rather ineffective and weak minister. He was replaced by Yevgeny Primakov, an experienced Soviet diplomat and former head of the Foreign Intelligence Service. This replacement, however, introduced a more statist and confrontational foreign policy in the post-1996 period. Moreover, it was the first indication that the re-election of Yeltsin would have important consequences that would change the foreign, defense and security policies of Russia.[304]

Yeltsin's presidential campaign was, for a Western observer, simple and visibly deceptive. Everywhere he went he promised whatever his audience asked. He theatrically ordered people in his entourage to immediately settle the problems that were proposed to him and he signed *ad hoc* decrees to enforce these decisions. In this way he tried to convince the public that he worked consciously on every individual problem that was presented by every Russian citizen he met during his campaign. One spectacular example of such an *ad hoc* decree concerned the AVF. During a

[303] Poll organized by VTsIOM as noted in Shevtsova*, Op. Cit*., p.156.

[304] About the so-called Kozyrev and the Primakov doctrine see for instance: Greg Austin and Alexey D. Muraviev, *The Armed Forces of Russia in Asia*, London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000, pp. 65-73.

lightning visit to the Chechen front Yeltsin promised soldiers that he would install an AVF by the year 2000.[305] In other words, without consulting with either the Ministry of Defense or the General Staff, he abolished conscription with a single signature. With this dramatic act he evidently tried to win the votes of those who favored an AVF in society itself, as well as, more concretely, the votes of the approximately 400,000 conscripts serving in the armed forces. In addition, Yeltsin enhanced his re-election strategy by monopolizing the mass media with the help of the new capitalists who ran the media. They extensively covered his public performances be they at rock concerts or street meetings all over the country.

However the work behind the scenes was much more important at this time than his public appearances. Yeltsin worked hard to find a way out of the Chechen war. Moreover, he admitted new members into the inner circle of his entourage. An important breakthrough was reached at the Economic Forum at Davos in the same year. During the meeting Anatoli Chubais bargained for the support of the most influential Russian bankers and industrialists on behalf of Yeltsin's presidential campaign.[306] This so-called Davos agreement had two results. First, Yeltsin received the support of the 'New Rich' in his campaign, which provided him with enough capital to bribe his way through the elections. Indeed, many rumors about corruption and bribery surrounded Yeltsin's re-elections.[307] Secondly, the small group of confidants around Yeltsin underwent a major upheaval. The 'Petersburg' group associated with Anatoli Chubais, now supported by 'the Group of Seven' and other young liberal reformers, stood against the group led by Korzhakov and Oleg Soskovets, two conservative minded Yeltsin trustees closely connected to the security forces.[308] In fact, Yeltsin now presided over two presidential campaign staffs of which the Chubais team gained more influence over time.

The Davos Pact can be perceived as another example of an influential agreement which was made far from the public eye that then had major consequences for Russian political life during Yeltsin's second term. Very soon, in March 1996, it was clear that Yeltsin's chances were changing in the presidential race. He soon obtained second place in the ratings and, more importantly, Zyuganov's support was diminishing. This slide could be seen in the opinion polls ratings. At the end of March, Zyuganov had 20% of the total ratings, while Yeltsin had 14%. In April 1996, the gap between the two protagonists was only 5%. By 1st June, Yeltsin had 36% and Zyuganov only 33%. By 16th June 1996, when the first round took place, Yeltsin won with 3% more votes than the Communist candidate, but, more importantly, Lebed received 15% of the votes and consequently became a crucial protagonist in the second round. Lebed would use this power position to bargain for an influential position in the Russian political scene.

In the beginning of July, after receiving Lebed's support, Yeltsin was elected as President of the Russian Federation in the second round. This victory was a political *tour de force*, but the price –especially in terms of democratic values and the evolution of the decision-making institutions- was

---

[305] Meant is here, Ukaz Nr. 722 of 16 May 1996, 'on the transition of recruitment of soldiers and sergeants of the armed forces and other forces in the Russian Federation on contract basis'.

[306] For a very informative account of the so-called Davos Pact and the role of the oligarchs in Yeltsin's re-election see: Chrystia Freeland, *Sale of the Century, Russia's Wild Ride From Communism to Capitalism*, Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2000, pp. 182-213.

[307] This observation is however challenged by Aron who accused Western scholars and journalists of condescension, if not Russophobia and racism, by stating that the corruption theory that surrounded the 1996 presidential elections. He continued his defense for the Russian president noting that ' After all, unfolding at the same time President Clinton's re-election campaign spent perhaps several hundred times more per voter, yet no one suggests that the American voters were 'bought', while an equally preposterous allegation, which depicts millions of Russian men and women as unthinking cattle, is advanced without a blush of shame.' Leon Aron, *Op. Cit*., p. 641.

[308] 'The group of seven', (after the G-7), existed of Boris Berezovsky, Vladimir Gusinsky, Pyotr Aven, Mikhail Fridman, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Aleksandr Smolensky, and Vladimir Potanin. Berezovsky would be the major brain behind the Davos Pact between Chubais and the bankers. Later Sergei Filatov, Viktor Ilyuhin and Tatyana Dyachenko, Yeltsin's daughter, joined this new team. It is this group of trustees that later will become the 'inner circle', 'the family' or a new 'dynasty' of Presidential trustees.

high. The results of the bargaining that took place behind he scenes in the first half of 1996 compromised the following concessions for Yeltsin, which could be observed in the way that personnel changes and institutional changes occurred after that period.

Firstly, many personnel changes occurred in Yeltsin's immediate entourage. It must be said that these people did not necessarily hold an official position in Russian politics. Some of them did while others only had informal contacts with the President or members of 'the family'. However, those who contributed to Yeltsin's re-election bought themselves into the President's inner-circle. Most conspicuous were the new liberals or 'the young reformers' and the 'robber barons' or 'oligarchs' by which was meant people who (legally or illegally) accumulated enormous wealth, power and sometimes their own 'empire' after the introduction of the free market. People like Chubais, and later popular young governor Boris Nemtsov, represented the new reformers, while Boris Berezovsky, who became the public face of Russia's wild capitalism, was one of the most notorious of the new elite 'oligarch' elite.[309]

Besides these cronies, the popular airborne forces General Alexander Lebed managed to become a remarkable actor in Russian high politics. He became secretary of the Security Council, a prestigious, though quasi non-executive position. The frank general, however, thought that doing politics was the same as commanding a military unit. He soon found out that the political game was more subtle and complex when he was fired as secretary of the Security Council and consequently lost all his official posts in Moscow four months later in October 1996. Finer's rule that the 'experts on violence' are generally spoken poor politicians was herewith once more illustrated.[310]

Berezovsky's influence was more lasting most of all because he had good personal contacts with the Yeltsin family, particularly Tatiana Dyachenko, the daughter of the President. In this way Berezovsky promoted himself not only as an informal but influential advisor to the President, but also proved himself to be a master intriguer who bypassed (and even boycotted) normal democratic procedures in political decision-making. In this way he even succeeded in attaining, albeit for a short time, the position of Deputy Secretary of the Security Council (after Lebed's dismissal) and then the position as Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States. It needs no explanation that Berezovsky's influence in the Kremlin was used by him to protect the interests of the *haute finances*. This not only compromised the way political decisions were made in Russia, but also stifled the emergence of a middle class in Russian society that was so badly needed for the development of a Western style democracy.[311]

When Yeltsin nominated Chubais as head of the Presidential Administration in July 1996 he not only made it clear that a new energetic stage in economic reform was on the cards, but also that the architect of privatization was now a political ally and confidant. 1997 was his political year and although all these trustees were adopted in the presidential inner circle as a consequence of the Yeltsin re-election effort, it must be underlined that their relations with each other were very hostile. None of the 'temporary partners' were prepared to share their influence and all of them ambitiously and uncompromisingly vied for the most powerful positions. Moreover, their coalition with Yeltsin was based on calculation and certainly not on conviction or personal loyalty to him himself. The inherent conflicts were openly demonstrated very soon in the unstable political year that was to come.

---

[309] Boris Berezovsky started his career as a car-dealer and soon accumulated an enormous empire of banks, oil companies, media companies and airlines. An interesting book that explained the system of how these oligarchs build their empire (and typically the importance of the car business) and how they influenced politics between 1994-1998 is: Stephen Handelman, *Comrade Criminal, Russia's New Mafiya*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 13-114. Also Chrystia Freeland devoted a study on this topic: Chrystia Freeland, *Sale of the Century, Russia's Wild Ride From Communism to Capitalism*, Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2000.

[310] S. E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback, The Role of the Military in Politics*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1988, (Third Edition) , pp. 12-14. See also Lilia Shevtsova, *Op. Cit*. pp. 201-202 and Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Warrior Who Would Rule Russia*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1996, p. 91.

[311] Paul Klebnikov, *Godfather of the Kremlin, Boris Berezovsky and the Looting of Russia*, New York: Harcourt, 2000.

The frictions reached such dimensions that Yeltsin lost his position as arbiter over the parties. The presidential regime based on the principle of 'divide and rule' lost herewith its meaning. Political rivalry in Yeltsin's immediate environment was out of control, in so far that during 1998 and certainly 1999, political observers could not identify the exact locus of power in the Russian political landscape. This confusing situation also had its consequences at the international level where, for instance, some analysts at NATO in Brussels did not know whom to talk to about Russian-NATO relations.

Secondly, the personnel changes in the President's immediate entourage were accompanied by institutional changes. In this case, the position of Lebed as secretary of the Security Council especially caused some fundamental changes with consequences for the defense debate. Yeltsin counterbalanced Lebed by installing a new institution: the Defense Council. This Council, chaired by Yeltsin himself and meant to meet on a monthly basis, was part of the presidential staff and was responsible for advising the president on defense policy, especially on coordinating military policy in matters of reform.[312] Yeltsin appointed Yuri Baturin, a long-term ally and 'liberal inside the Kremlin', as head of this Council. But here, it was also proved that Yeltsin's policy of control based on the principle of 'divide and rule', created nothing more than conflict and certainly not efficient decision-making institutions. Lebed and Baturin soon clashed over several issues and constantly trespassed into each other's fields of responsibilities in the defense and security spheres.

The adoption of Lebed into the executive with some limited levers of power at his disposal had another far-reaching consequence in the defense arena. Lebed called for the dismissal of the Russian Minister of Defense Pavel Grachev and proposed Igor Rodionov, a sincere and professional general (although mistrusted by the liberal-democrats due to his involvement in suppressing the Tbilisi uprising in 1989)[313], as the new candidate for the post of Minister of Defense. On July 17th 1996, Yeltsin gave in to Lebed's demands, and Rodionov was appointed to the Ministry of Defense. The proposed candidate was also positively welcomed by former Lieutenant General Lev Rokhlin, then the head of the Duma's Committee on Defense and Security, who was another friend of Lebed. In the summer months of 1996, it was as if Lebed's influence reached it peak, the more he succeeded in getting rid of the Kremlin's 'party of war', he could finally end the war in Chechnya. Yeltsin fulfilled at least one promise he made during his presidential campaign, by ending the war. His re-election thus had important personnel and institutional consequences for the military forces. Moreover, after the unpopular war with Chechnya was ended, an euphoric mood was perceived in Russian society in general during the summer months, that was reminiscent of the first half of 1992. However, the question remained about how efficient this (second) period of institutional turmoil was, and whether it could give a new impetus to reform in the military.

Yeltsin's Regime Becomes Stagnant

Immediately after his re-election Yeltsin fell sick, a condition from which he never fully recovered. Notwithstanding the fact that 1997 became registered in the political annals as the year in which a new attempt to put (economic) reform back on track occurred, Russia in fact underwent a process of political decay. The permanent struggle between the different members of the executive, between the legislature and the executive branch, and between practically all the key institutional actors and the President made Russia a 'stagnant' state. Yeltsin isolated himself and only had sporadic contact with his own advisors. This created an atmosphere where intrigue and conspiracy were common in

[312] See: *Rossiskaia Gazeta*, 27 July 1996; F. Stephen Larrabee and Theodore W. Karasik, *Op. Cit*., p. 21; and Greg Austin and Alexey D. Muraviev, *Op. Cit*., pp. 144-155.

[313] For Lebed's account of this event, see: Alexander Lebed, *General Alexander Lebed, My Life and My Country*, Washington: Regnery Publishing, 1997, pp. 213-219.

the Kremlin and stood in great contrast with the ideal principles of transparency and democratic order that the Russia Constitution supported.

The President's main concern was the conservation of his position and therefore he fired any individual who dared to express his presidential ambitions or who was too assertive. As a result, the years 1997-1998 were characterized politically by a constant reshuffling of personnel and frequent institutional changes. The rationale behind these presidential actions was the subject of much speculation.

Hence, the question to what extent Yeltsin was still in control of the political game was reflected in the fact that his mental and physical health appeared to make him more of a ceremonial leader than a powerful executive. 'The family', which was almost an official actor in Russian politics during this period, was accused of steering the political agenda behind the scenes. The whole truth on this issue may possibly never be revealed, but it is a fact that there were many ministerial replacements, which began in March 1997, when Chernomrydin's government became dominated by the young liberals of Boris Nemtsov and Anatoli Chubais, who were both nominated as First Deputy Prime Ministers. Igor Rodionov the last representative of Lebed, was replaced with General Igor Sergeyev through the lobbying of the new liberals, in the new government. The former commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces was apparently more suitable for the new liberals dominating the government because he was more loyal, less vocal and less assertive on the defense budget issue. To the credit of this government it must be said that it was full of energy and genuine intentions to implement liberal economic reforms. However, the division of the political world, motivated most of the time by antipathy towards Chubais, the bankers and media would stifle many of the intended reforms.

Shevtsova blamed this 'traditional' society for the failure of this liberal attempt to reform Russian society when she wrote:

> "Despite all the modern trappings, Russian society as a whole remained highly traditional. Patrimonialism, old patron-client relationships, typical Soviet habits and symbols, and populist sentiments retained their hold. The very fact that the country was still governed by representatives of the communist nomenclature showed the depths of the roots of the past. For a significant portion of society, the members of Chubais's team-with all their self-assurance, their lack of a sense of proportion or of respect for the old symbolism, their conviction that they could do anything and their disdain for all roots- were an alien growth. Also alien to the establishment was a large part of the business world, especially those who had not gone through the Soviet school and were not familiar with the habits of the old establishment. The parvenus were able to attain power and to make money. They could be assigned certain tasks-they could become functionaries, like Chubais. The liberals could be liked by Yeltsin, and some of them, like Nemtsov, could even become his favorite. But they could not rise above that level-they could not overcome the old establishment and get to the point of dictating their own laws."[314]

At the end of 1997, Yeltsin was dissatisfied with the liberal reforms and dismissed the Chernomyrdin government. Chubais and Anatoli Kulikov, the former Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs, were also fired. Chernomyrdin had perhaps become too powerful in the mind of the President and was replaced by the thirty-five-year-old Sergei Kiriyenko who was accepted by the Duma on April 17th 1998. The new government was a mixture of liberal forces, while the ministries of power were manned by the same people, namely Sergeyev for the Ministry of Defense, Primakov for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Stepashin became the Minster of

[314] Lilia Shevtsova, *Op. Cit*., p. 231-232.

Internal Affairs. This presidential 'coup' as this replacement was called, did not bring stability, on the contrary, the antagonism between the legislature and the executive grew while the economic situation deteriorated and found itself at the brink of collapse.

The 1997 shake-up also influenced the military decision-making system. Kokoshin, the only servant in the Ministry of Defense who could survive as a civilian in this ultimate military environment, was appointed as General Inspector of the Russian Armed Forces. Later, during the next institutional shake-up, he became the new Secretary of the Security Council, while he kept his function as General Inspector of the Russian Armed Forces, which by then had been incorporated into the organization of the Security Council. Meanwhile, the Defense Council, an institution that ultimately did not last longer than two years, was abolished. The Security Council once again formally became the sole institution that bolstered all coordination functions in defense and security issues, a state of affairs that resembled the situation of 1992-1993.

Kiriyenko was sacrificed in his turn after the ruble's devaluation on August 18th 1998 and the Russian economy collapsed. Yeltsin again proposed Chernomyrdin as the new Prime Minister, but finally had to nominate Primakov as a consensus candidate for the post. This new government was a centrist government including people from the Soviet past, technocrats and personnel from the regions. During 1999, in the period that lies beyond the scope of this study, Yeltsin changed the government twice within a few months. He replaced Primakov with Stepashin during the NATO air campaign over Kosovo and the latter with Vladimir Putin, the current President of the Russian Federation, as a consequence of Stepashin's weak response to the attacks by Chechen warlords on Dagestan in September 1999.

The poor economic situation culminated in the collapse of the Russian economy in August 1998 which, together with the political cleavages in Russian society, and their collective blows to a presidential power game mixed with a generational conflict, resulted in a completely stagnant society, in which decision-making procedures and institutions were constantly under attack.

The discussion about reform was thus overshadowed by a merciless power game in which the intrigues were mostly orchestrated behind the scenes by a small circle of Yeltsin's trustees. Moreover, in this political context, failure as well as success in reform was punished with dismissal because both threatened the power structures of the Kremlin. In this way a new vicious circle of inefficiency was created which could not be broken as long as the rules of the Yeltsin's political game remained fundamentally unchanged.

Conclusions: The Pyramidal Presidential System and the Consequences for Reform

In the previous section, the main aspects of the development of the Russian political system under Yeltsin were presented. The resulting moribund political system was mainly the result of what Shevtsova called the 'pyramidal presidential system'. This system, in the specific context of Yeltsin's regime, was a contradictory system that combined an almost complete form of presidential power with an inability to exercise this power, which intrinsically bred vicious circles of inefficiency, which subsequently compromised the capacity for efficient and 'real' rule. The powerful individual was not able to rule this complex, internally divided and extremely unstable system.

In his ambition to accumulate as much power as possible in order to survive in this divided political landscape, Yeltsin created a strong presidential regime, which was reflected in the presidential powers embedded in the design of the 1993 Constitution. This political regime was thus not only the result of his personality, but also of Russia's societal and political evolution, which was characterized by chaotic pluralism, political cleavages, and the growing assertiveness of the regions towards the center. Therefore, he had to make compromises with powerful groups such as the oligarchs and the regional administrators, which then resulted in a permanent change of goals and a loss of control over the implementation of resources.

When Yeltsin's health deteriorated in 1996 he was physically unable to play referee among the competing groupings that surrounded him. Yeltsin could no longer impose a balance among the political factions or prove his supremacy in the system. In the end he came up with spectacular dismissals and governmental changes, which on the one had proved his power in the system, but on the other hand demonstrated his weakness and his inability to create a normally functioning state.

Instead of a coherent state system many centers of power were created through which interest and elite groups could channel their interests. The most important of these were the Presidential Administration, the Security Council, and the 'group of four': the President, the Prime Minister, and the heads of the lower and upper houses of the parliament. If this system could be seen as it was, it was essentially the fact that it was extremely unstable that made it inefficient. There was simply not a minimum of political or societal consensus available that could stabilize Russian society and this in its turn was translated into elite mobility in state functions and permanent changes in decision-making institutions.

Samuel Huntington would call this a weak political organization because it lacked both legitimacy and only had a low level of *institutionalization*. Huntington explained this last concept by the way the different institutions composing the system were allowed to develop their own traditions and by the way they were able to act autonomously.[315] The Russian political system did not meet these two conditions. In the pyramidal presidential regime Yeltsin unified three important functions in his person: he took the decision-making initiative; he managed both the politicians and the organization, and he was able to establish the criteria of rationality. These three functions are normally distributed over different instances in a complex organization in order to make the system work efficiently.[316] The fact that the Russian president (intentionally or non-intentionally) monopolized these functions may be seen as an alternative explanation of why the Russian political system in the 1990's was inefficient and why it can be categorized as only a semi- democratic system.

In what follows, the military reform debate is overviewed in order to evaluate it as a decision-making problem. For now, it may be clear that the political context in which this debate advanced was not an encouraging one in which to introduce one of the most sweeping changes to the military organization that were ever undertaken in Russia. Moreover, this overview demonstrated that the military elite was not only a passive player in this game, but that it was also an active participant in the process. Thus, the military elite was one of the co-founders of this super-presidential system.

2. 3. The All-Volunteer Debate under Yeltsin

The political landscape in which the military reform debate developed was extremely unstable and found itself at the brink of collapse several times, which subsequently resulted in a weak state that had to cope with bureaucratic struggles and conflict containment among political coalitions.

Moreover, there was a fundamental lack of consensus on which role the state had to play in post-Soviet society. Russia consequently evolved from a rigid totalitarian to a chaotic paralyzed state, in which a constant reorganization of the political institutions as well as a high degree of elite mobility were the basic characteristics. In 1996 Hans-Henning Schröder, an analyst from the Federal Institute for Eastern Scientific and International Studies (Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien), summarized this situation as follows:

> "It is not possible to create an orderly political proces, in which the interests and the different point of views of the political factions could be integrated. Early in Yeltsin's leadership there emerged several contradictory forces. ... the dynamics

[315] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, New haven: Yale University Press, 1968, p. 345.
[316] Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedberg, *Op. Cit*., p. 189.

> of the presidential apparatus fundamentally changed as responsibilities and posts were redistributed. In this atmosphere each politcial faction seeked the best position to maximaze its power. "[317]

The Russian political system lacked the necessary levels of both legitimacy and trust, despite the fact that the leaders of the state had organized the democratically prescribed elections. Under these circumstances, the process of 'institutionalization' was extremely difficult. The fervently embraced word 'reform', that had mobilized and motivated so many at the beginning of the nineties lost its entire candor as Yeltsin's regime progressed. Schröder continued his severe analysis on Russia's transformation when he wrote:

> "The policy of the president did not follow a well thought concept or program. It was modified by political battles and the different interest groups who tried to influence the president." [318]

Every attempt to rationalize and to improve the decision-making system ended in a more complex and opaque organization and the more energy that was invested in talking about reform, the more stagnant the environment became. Once more, certain Russian politicians, including Yeltsin, had created the opposite of what they originally intended.

The way Yeltsin's regime evolved and the way it handled reform in general must be seen as the global context in which military reform evolved. The reciprocal interference of politicians and the military elite in each other's domain of expertise will serve as a basic argument to explain why the conceptual phase of military reform ended in failure. The three official military reform plans that were presented in the period 1992-1998 by the Ministers of Defense and in which the conscription-professionalization debate was prominent will be surveyed. As the plans will be chronologically reviewed, attention will be paid to the personality of the ministers, their professional background, and the (political) logic of their appointments, which will reveal some aspects of the different reform ideas. They will also shed some light on the main political difficulties that the ministers were confronted with during their time in office. This will explain why the enthusiasm of the initial phase of each reform endeavor faded away as reform attempts quickly stagnated.

This chronologically based approach may be misleading, for the discussion about these issues was in reality much more chaotic. Alternative ideas and external interference will be mentioned and situated in the dynamic of the political context of the particular moment at which they were expressed. Finally, all these observations clustered around this political and institutional analysis are summarized in an evaluation of the AVF idea under Yeltsin.

The All-Volunteer Force as a Reform Topic

The Grachev Period (May 1992- July 1996). The appointment of General Pavel Grachev as to the position of Minister of Defense in May 1992, was essentially the result of political calculation and favoritism. Yeltsin knew that the armed forces were an important player in Russian politics and, therefore, the loyalty of at least a fraction of the military was crucial for his political survival. On the other hand, individual military officers were also zealously seeking personal contact with the president, as this would help them in their search for the well-known Russian patronage bonds or *blat'*. This practice was a reciprocal process, as both actors – politicians and military leaders alike -

[317] Translated from: Hans-Henning Schröder, Viele köche verderben den Brei…Zur Strukturellen Führungsschwäche der Jelzin-Administration (Teil I), *Aktuelle Analysen* , Nr 53/1996*,* Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien, 3 September 1996, p. 2.
[318] Translated from: *Ibid.*, p. 2.

were active in it and both were motivated by political and organizational survival. The immediate result of this political reality was that it undermined the concept of military professionalism, at least in the way that Huntington defined it and as it is characterized by: expertise, responsibility and corporate identity.[319] During the period 1990-1991 the manner in which the relationship between Yeltsin and Grachev evolved, may be considered as a protypical model for civil-military relations under Yeltsin.[320]

During this period, liberal politicians were disillusioned by the appointment of an officer to the position of Minister of Defense, because they had hoped that their support for Yeltsin in the turbulent 1989-1991 period would be rewarded by the appointment of one or the other short listed civilian candidates, such as Andrei Kokoshin or the late Galina Starovoitova. This disappointment may not be underestimated, because it not only influenced the process of Russian democratization in macro-political terms, but it also allowed the military elite to monopolize the defense debate.

Indeed, Yeltsin's decision meant that many military reformers of the 1988-1991 period resigned from the ranks and that during the Yeltsin regime the reform debate would no longer be influenced by external, civilian voices. Moreover, the prominent place that was given to the military leaders by Yeltsin meant, that non-governmental organizations, which once had a voice in the military debate, had faded away. Thus, Yeltsin's political calculations had a negative impact on grass-roots activism and it illustrated just how transparent the decision-making process in military affairs had become.

The fact that Yeltsin did not choose a civilian Minister of Defense subsequently does not mean that he could nominate any military officer that he was in close contact with for the position. If Yeltsin were to do this, it would not guarantee that the officers as a group would support Yeltsin's candidate, because the officers' corps itself was already too fragmented due to an internal power struggle which was rooted in bureaucratic survival. Thus in the end, Yeltsin had to choose a candidate from a powerful faction of the military elite who had support from the armed forces in general and who had at least a minimal level of support from the civilian political world. This was the reason why General Kobets, who was a personal military advisor to Yeltsin and who became the Chief Inspector of the Ministry of Defense in May 1992, was not appropriate for the ministerial post. Kobets was a controversial personality in military circles and he had little credibility among his peers among the General Staff officers. General Grachev was thus a consensus candidate, who could more or less satisfy both the majority of the civilian elite as well as the military leadership. For the civilians it was significant that Grachev opposed the August Coup and the military had a high regard for the young and energetic elite airborne troops, as well as the *Afghansty* group. In other words, Yeltsin respected the cynical 'Baranets axiom' that stated:

> "The main military department must be one of the most trustworthy supporters of the First Person of the state and, especially, in agreement with an unstable society."[321]

However, the fact that Yeltsin nominated Grachev to the position of Minister of Defense, brought some supplementary political uncertainty and friction to the government. Firstly, it was not a secret that Grachev had limited professional skills and/or experience to fulfill the complex job he was assigned to. Some of Grachev's colleagues stated that he was a good field commander, but a poor manager. Grachev was not a typical product of the well known and intellectually skilled class of *Genshtab* officers, but his lack of competence, however, was not a problem for Yeltsin. Grachev's appointment might have been the result of a well intended policy, because for Yeltsin,

---

[319] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, New York: Vintage Books, 1957, pp. 7-18.
[320] Viktor Baranets, *Elt'tsin I ego generaly, zapiski polkovnika genshtaba*, Moskva: Severshenno Sekretno, 1998, pp. 155-176.
[321] Translated from: *Ibid*. p. 480.

this appointment was the result of political calculation, which in his estimation took precedence over professional competence.

> "It may well be that for many in Yeltsin's entourage these concerns [about Grachev's incompetence] spoke rather in favor of the new Defense Minister, in much the same way as Yazov's narrow-mindedness had been his main attraction for Gorbachev."[322]

Secondly, as a 44-year-old appointee General Grachev overtook many senior General Staff officers, who had hoped for a promotion to the General Staff and possibly to the Ministry of Defense. Their feelings of envy and injustice were strengthened when Grachev brought a group of Afghan war veterans and personal friends with him to work in key positions in the Ministry of Defense. Indeed, the arrival of Grachev paralleled some important personnel changes in the Ministry of Defense, which included those of Colonel Ivanov and General Burlakov. To make matters worse, some of Grachev's protégés, such as the former commander of the Western Group of Forces, General Matvei Burlakov, were the subject of corruption investigations. Incompetence combined with corruption, meant that after the initial euphoria of Grachev's appointment, Grachev was eventually rejected by the military elite, and became isolated inside the military establishment.

The result of the Grachev appointment was a fierce bureaucratic struggle between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff which was even fought in the public arena. Many general officers expressed their discontent about the leadership, among them were, for instance: the Chief of the General Staff General Koleshnikov, First Deputy Defense Minister General Gromov, Deputy Defense Minister General Valeri Mironov, General Georgi Kondrateyev, Commander of the Airborne Troops General Evgeni Podkolzin, General Eduard Vorobyev and General Alexander Lebed.[323] The disagreement between the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense became so intense that sources in the presidential administration suggested bringing the General Staff directly under the control of the president instead of its normal subordination to the Ministry of Defense. If this change were to take place then this would make the Ministry of Defense only responsible for the military budget and the military industrial complex, rather than military operational control. But it was due to the questionable loyalty of the Chief of Staff General Koleshnikov vis-à-vis the president that prohibited the implementation of this idea. Once again, informal relations and networks, personal loyalty, and bonds of trust, steered Russian military policy and institution building, rather than rules of sound and transparent policy making and professionalism.

The political appointment of the mediocre Grachev to the post of the first post-Soviet Ministry of Defense thus created a highly unstable and even hostile environment, in which drafting a new reform plan and making historic organizational changes to the system became very difficult. The power struggle that was taking place among the Russian high command could be also be observed in a broader political context. In fact, a Hobbesian state emerged in post-Soviet Russia in which everybody fought each other for scarce resources. Externally, ministries, departments and administrations were engaged in fierce bureaucratic struggles, and internally the controversial leadership fought for its own survival. It was president Yeltsin who stood at the top of this political battlefield, as he was the initiator and driving force behind it. The power struggle in the defense ministry was motivated by 'provincial' thinking and/or the misplaced camaraderie of military officers responsible for implementing reform which favored the forces and units they originated from. Moreover, the personal profit seeking of individual high-ranking officers, (so contradictory to the ideology of the Russian officer corps that prescribed 'selflessness and service to the country'),

---

[322] Pavel Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, London: Sage, 1996, p. 61.

[323] Not surprisingly Lebed noted in his memoirs that especially the generals Semenov, Vorobyev, Gromov, and Mironov were officers of 'honor'. See Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Warrior Who Would Rule Russia*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1996, p. 63.

introduction of a market economy and to a less visible and a minor degree the introduction of an AVF.[325]

Thus, this new team of policy makers incorporated some of the core ideas of the liberal agenda into their reform plan. Moreover, some alternative reform plans were published during the following years in the press by Kobets, Lobov and Lopatin, and they all insisted on the introduction of the AVF into the system. [326] Although these articles were politically not very influential, it kept the professional army debate alive. The fact that Grachev included some popular ideas in his reform plan during this time period may be regarded with some skepticism. Indeed, it is impossible to find out to what extent Grachev actualy really believed in the idea of the professionalization of the armed forces himself. It could be possible that the political significance of this reform document for the Ministry of Defense was much higher than its actual practical significance. With the swift publication of the reform plan Grachev could at least satisfy the high expectations of the population that was focused on the conscription debate. In this sense he could calm the skepticism of liberal politicians towards a military officer, who acted as the Minister of Defense.

Secondly, Grachev used some ideas from successful military reform endeavors that took place in the international arena. It was clear that the Western experience of the AVF provided a powerful example for the Russians: the more so because off the very successful campaign of 'Desert Storm' against Iraq which showed how modern warfare had changed, and how obsolete conscript armies were in this type of warfare.[327] Thus, Grachev imitated the international experience which was tempered by his own negative personal experience in the Afghan war and subsequently may have strengthened his conviction.

Thirdly, and perhaps the most tangible reason for his reform plan was the fact that the Russian military saw itself confronted with a severe crisis in the conscription system. Russian youth simply did not want to serve in the Russian armed forces anymore, which seriously endangered personnel levels. As a result of these shortages, Grachev was forced to incorporate the idea of professional soldiers into the Russian military, in order to man the Russian military. In this sense, the option of a professional army was a matter of necessity rather than one of choice.

This last point may be highlighted by the fact that Grachev started the implementation of his reform plan and the recruitment of contract soldiers in an over-hasty manner. This may be deduced from the facts that: firstly, his reform plan did not have the necessary legislative backing; secondly, the Russian army was not ready to host this new type of soldier from an organizational point of view, thirdly because fundamental strategic documents such as the security and military doctrine were drafted eighteen months later; and fourthly because Grachev underestimated the bureaucratic resistance to the implementation of his plan that would take place. In other words, Grachev's professionalization campaign lacked legitimacy, practical organization, a conceptual background, and an organizational consensus.

---

[325] See for a severe critique of the 'Washington consensus' and the United States Russia policy: the political inspired Christopher Cox report: Christopher Cox, *Russia's Road to Corruption, How the Clinton Administration Exported Government Instead of Free Enterprise and Failed the Russian People*, Washington: U.S. House of Representatives, September 2000 and for a more scholarly critique: Stephen F. Cohen, *Failed Crusade, America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000.

[326] See for example: Konstantin Kobets, 'Prioritety voennoj politiki Rosii' ['Priorities of Russia's Military Policy'] in: *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 5 February 1992; Vladimir Lobov, 'Not to reform but to build Anew', in: *Moscow News*, Nr. 4, 31 January 1993; Vladimir Lopatin, 'A Professional Army Instead of an Armed Nation', *Novaya Ezhednevnaya Gazeta*, 26 May 1994.

[327] See for instance: S. Bogdanov, 'Uroki 'Buri v Pustyne''[Lessons from 'Desert Storm'], *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 17 May 1991. Lieutenant-General S. Bogdanov was at the time of the printing of this article director of the Centre for Military-Strategic Research of the General Staff. This was very prestigious, highly professional, but rather unknown organ of the General Staff responsible for the coordination and conduct of future critical and applied research to the most important questions of military strategy. On this research centre see: S.J. Main, *The "Brain of the Russian Army-The Centre for Military-Strategic Research, General Staff 1985-2000*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, C 101, March 2000.

Without any formal legislative backing, Grachev was recruiting *kontraktniki* before he knew exactly: how many soldiers he was allowed to recruit, how much money he needed to pay them, what standards these potential soldiers had to maintain and what status this new type of soldier would have to have. Grachev was under so much pressure at the time to enforce this policy, and the need for fresh soldiers was so severe, he apparently could not wait for the necessary legislative backing to endorse his plan.[328]

Another example that may illustrate the incoherence that existed between executive and legislative documents in the Russian government is situated in the discussion about the personnel strength of the Russian forces.[329] In the reform document that Grachev made public in July 1992, it stated that the Russian armed forces would be reduced from 2,8 million in 1992 to 2,1 million at the end of 1994 and 1,5 million people at the end of 1999. However, the publication of the law 'On Defense' – the basic law that defined the position of the armed forces in society - in September 1992, prescribed that the Russian armed forces may not represent more than 1% of the Russian population, which meant a force of 1,5 million people. The law also stated that the objective of 1,5 million people had to be reached by the end of 1994. These formal documents therefore make it clear that the timing of personnel reduction was in discord with the law.

To make the situation even more chaotic, Grachev frequently changed the numerical objectives of military personnel. Some analysts even suggested that the Russian high command did not know how many people were in the military at any given time. In reality the situation in the forces also proved to be so unstable and unpredictable that it became practically ungovernable. Grachev's reform plan was not well underscored legally, because at that time the Supreme Soviet was, firstly, simply overworked (so many aspects of the new state had to be organized and legally covered), and secondly, the military forces was not a priority for the parliamentarians. Thirdly, the military elite could not, or did not, want to provide the necessary information to the parliament, as it was still trying to cover up military secrets. Finally, there was a growing antagonism between the legislature and the executive – which hinged on the well-known antagonisms between Ruslan Khasbulatov and Yeltsin - that would culminate in the October 1993 crisis. It may be clear that the ultimate evaluation of who was responsible for the legislative-executive dispute on reform is difficult to establish. Most probably it was a shared responsibility, since many people openly expressed intentions that were very often compromised by hidden (political) agendas. The competence of those involved in this dispute was often debatable and the organizational reality was also very complex.

How the practical implementation of the recruitment policy was going to be enforced is the subject of the study's third part, however some elements of it will be addressed here as they illustrate how incoherent Grachev's policy was. For instance, the old recruitment structure, orientated towards the incorporation of conscripted soldiers, was not fit for recruiting professional soldiers. The transformation of the *voenkomati* (or the local recruitment bureaus) from being a passive administration agent into an active seeker of potential candidates within a very short period of time, was unrealistic because the *voenkomati* were not only poorly informed themselves, but because they lacked the necessary means and, most importantly, they lacked the necessary mentality to do this work.

Moreover, the soldiers who prolonged their conscript service as contract soldiers very soon experienced the black hole in which the recruitment of professional soldiers found itself in at that time. There was simply no structure in place for them to apply for contract status due to the disorder

[328] The crisis of conscription system was severely felt in the Army. It was some infantry units manning levels were only at 50% of peacetime recruits.

[329] For an extended discussion on the problem of personnel strength in the Russian army, see: Franz Walter, ' Wie in russland militärpolitik "gemacht" wird, die verringerung der Streitkräzfte als Kernstück der Militärreform, *Osteuropa*, Nr. 1, January 2000, pp. 42-55; and Stephen Foye, 'Manning the Russian Army: Is Contract Service a Success?' *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 3, Nr. 13, 1 April 1994.

in the recruitment offices and they were disappointed by the poor terms of the contracts and the lack of resources to train them to be professional soldiers. As a result, the professionalization campaign failed on the basis of an insufficient intake of new, qualified soldiers and the disillusionment of the contracted soldiers. Many contract soldiers, with a lack of prospects for economical survival in Russian society, left the ranks before their contract obligations were fulfilled. Those who stayed on as *kontraktniki* sought an escape from social problems at home. Due to these unfavorable circumstances, the qualitative standards of the contract soldiers dropped dramatically. Based on this reality, the initial enthusiasm for creating professional soldiers fell away as skeptics found new arguments to denounce the idea of contract service. This was another example of how crisis management based on unadapted structures only bred more crises and how, in this manner, the logic of 'the vicious circle of inefficiency' was not broken.

The first professionalization attempt failed not only on legal and practical grounds, but also on conceptual grounds. For instance, the idea of having mobile forces was closely linked with the idea of professionalization and the AVF, which was not supported by a military doctrine since it was issued late in November 1993. In other words, the basic conceptual document that had to outline the future tasks of the military organization was drafted a year and a half after the major implementation of the policy had taken place. The types of conflict that the professional soldier was being trained for still remained unaddressed in this document. In other words, the implementation of the plan came before the conceptualization of the plan, rather than vice versa, which was the opposite of rational decision-making theory. Baev makes the following remark:

> "Debate on this transition remained rather marginal, so the implementation of a new idea – as too often in Russian history- started before it had been properly thought through."[330]

Finally, by introducing the idea of mobile forces into the military forces, Grachev underestimated the level of organizational resistance to the fundamental implementation of the plan, which meant the abolishment of some types of units and the regrouping of other units into a different formation. Generally the airborne regiments were the most uncooperative and the elite component of the Russian armed forces did not accept downsizing. These disputes isolated Grachev from the military establishment and even from his own regiment, who distanced itself from his plans and even boycotted him. The dispute between the commander of the Russian airborne troops, Colonel-General Podzolski (supported by General Lebed) and Grachev, may therefore be seen as symptomatic of the bureaucratic resistance that was taking place in the military forces. There was a lack of consensus about the necessity of change and, more importantly, the practical consequences of it. In sum, the narrow minded corps of Russian generals, who let tactical considerations prevail over strategic thinking, were themselves responsible for the introduction of the new ideas of Mobile Forces and, consequently, the armed forces' professionalization.

From the sidelines it is easy to judge Grachev's period in office on the professionalization issue alone because it was such a startling failure. The death toll during the first Chechen war may also be used as a macabre illustration of this point. Nevertheless, Grachev's task was not easy given the organizational crisis he inherited from Soviet times and the extremely difficult political situation he faced. As a result, Grachev was obliged to build the Russian Armed Forces on the unstable basis of a multitude of practical problems, which were the result of the disintegration of the USSR. Notwithstanding these extenuating circumstances, Grachev was himself responsible for the fact that he encircled himself with mediocre and suspicious people who brought corruption to the highest level of the military establishment. These scandals resulted in the fact that Grachev was nicknamed 'Pasha Mercedes', an epithet that did not honor any reforming credentials, but rather association with corruption within the military. Moreover, personal loyalty to the president earned him the

[330] Baev, *Op. Cit*., p. 70.

highest office in the military, but he had to pay a high price for it: organizational isolation and as a consequence, a reform failure. Grachev was responsible for the failed introduction of contract soldiers, which ultimately compromised the future professionalization of the Russian armed forces. In conclusion, Grachev can be placed in the gallery of mediocre generals who fit the ideals outlined in Norman Dixon's 'psychology of military incompetence'.[331] Grachev was the product of a military system that did not prepare him for his political role as a reformer. Charles Dick, a distinguished British analyst of Russian military affairs, noted more bluntly that Grachev was 'an over-promoted, rapidly corrupted incompetent'.[332] This last observation cannot be applied to the successor of Pavel Grachev, namely Igor Rodionov who would give a new (although short-lived) impulse to the Russian discussion on military reform.

The Rodionov Period (July 1996- March 1997). The arrival of General Igor Rodionov as Minister of Defense on 18th July 1996 was the result of political negotiations between President Yeltsin and General Lebed. In order to get the support of Lebed during the second round of the presidential election in July 1996, Lebed not only demanded a prominent place in Russian security affairs for himself, he also negotiated the replacement of Pavel Grachev by Igor Rodionov.[333] In other words, politics also prevailed in the case of Rodionov's appointment, which is also considered to be a controversial outcome of Yeltsin's 1996-power struggle.

The controversy that surrounded this appointment was not so much based on the professional skills and personal integrity of Rodionov, but was instead based on Yeltsin's strained relationship with Russian parliamentarians. The difference between Rodionov and his predecessor was significant. For example, Rodionov publicized an alternative reform plan in November 1995[334] and the curriculum vitae of the new minister earned the respect from both Russian and foreign military analysts, who in turn became more optimistic about the prospects of Russian military reform.[335] Charles Dick called Rodionov; '…an honest, intellectually impressive and respected officer genuinely determined on radical reform implemented responsibly'.[336]

However, the relationship between the liberals and the new minister did have some problems. The liberal members of parliament had not forgotten that Rodionov was ultimately responsibility for the Tbilisi massacre in Georgia in April 1989, where he was Commander-in-Chief of the Transcaucasus MD. With Rodionov in office, the liberals felt that once again a representative of the traditional Soviet military was responsible for the management of the Ministry of Defense. In his turn, Rodionov still referred, even in 1995, to the 'anti-army-campaign of the late eighties' as a 'scandalous' period. The hostile relationship between the 'old guard' and the 'young Turks' showed that it would probably never be normalized. Yet, however controversial Yeltsin's decision might

---

[331] Norman F. Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*, London: Random House, 1994.

[332] Charles J. Dick, 'Russian Military Reform: Status and prospects', *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, C100, June 1998.

[333] The fact that Lebed's relation with Grachev was so soured says much about the position of Grachev in the military organization, since Lebed has been a direct and close collaborator of Grachev during military operations in Afghanistan, and as deputy airborne forces commander. (See: Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Op; Cit.*, pp. 61-64 and Alexander Lebed*, My Life and My Country by the Man Who would lead Russia*, Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1997, pp. 28-32 and 37-38.)

[334]Igor Rodionov, 'Voennaya reforma v Rossii. ee glavnaya tsel: obespeshit 'bezopasnost' gosudarstva', *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, Nr. 3, 18 November 1995.

[335] Many saw the arrival of Rodionov in the Ministry of Defense as a relief. See for instance: Michail Orr, 'Rodionov and Reform', *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, C92, January 1997; and Lester W. Grau and Timothy I. Thomas, 'Russian Minister of Defense General Igor Rodionov: In With The Old, in With The New', *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, June 1996, pp. 442-452.' Also in Russia Rodionov was welcomed as minister of defense. For example, General Lev Rokhlin, who preceded the parliamentary Commission on Defense, supported the new Minister in public.

[336] C. J. Dick, 'Russian Military Reform: Status and Prospects', *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, C100, June 1998, p. 4. Dick's appreciation of Rodionov stood in great contrast with his views on Grachev, of whom he noted that he '…was an over-promoted, rapidly corrupted incompetent.', See: *Ibid*., p. 3.

have been, it indicated, once more, how insignificant a role the liberals played in the political arena at that moment and how mercilessly Yeltsin handled his former coalition partners.

Rodionov's rise to ministerial office should be situated in the broader context of the 'Rodionov phenomenon' of 1995, in which the disastrous results of the Chechen war and the Duma elections played a clarifying role. Indeed, in the first half of 1995, after three years of silence, the terrible campaign in Chechnya brought military reform back onto the political agenda. On February 16th 1995, for instance, during his annual address to the Russian parliament, Yeltsin stated that the situation in the armed forces was catastrophic and that military reform was a top priority for his government. On February 23rd 1995, the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland, Yeltsin repeated this message and he subsequently urged the government and the Security Council (respectively under the leadership of Viktor Chernomyrdin and Oleg Lobov) to devise a plan for military reform. Though there was a call for reform, in reality, this flare-up of interest by the Yeltsin government was limited to simple rhetoric, and it did not result in any practical consequences.

It was the silent, but stubborn, rejection of 'reform without financial means' by the military elite from the outset of the Yeltsin era -especially by Grachev and the Chief of the General Staff Colonel-General Mikhail Kolesnikov- that suffocated Yeltsin's intentions. But at least, military reform was once again a political topic and an issue for debate. The first Chechen war had another consequence: it would prove to be a supplementary cause of the fragmentation of the officer corps because many officers denounced the war. Vitaly Shlykov wrote that in April 1995, officers refused to fight in the war in Chechnya.[337] This denouncement against the war was essentially based on moral principles and this group of officers is referred to as 'the moralists'. [338]

Colonel General Eduard Vorobyev, the deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, resigned from the armed forces out of protest against the war, and subesequently he is an example of the 'moralist' group. The majority of the officers, who did not agree with the Chechen war, did so for purely professional reasons and they were labeled as the 'professionals'. This group of officers bluntly blamed the Russian leaders' amateurish preparation of the military forces for their problems in Chechnya. This discontented group of officers, however, did not necessarily leave the ranks and Rodionov was clearly a member of this group of 'professionals'. Rodionov, to improve his political profile, at that time as the Commander of the General Staff Academy, had already used this argument on the onset of Russian independence, to improve his political profile.

At a later stage these two groups organized themselves into two dissident socio-political movements. The 'moralists' created the 'Movement For Military Reform' ['Za voennuiu Reformu'] in September 1995, and the 'professionals' founded another movement called the 'Honor and Motherland' ['*Chest I Rodina*']. In the context of the Duma elections, the military elite played an active role and political parties and movements became associated with these military movements. Indeed, the military's participation in politics was a reciprocal process in which parties were actively looking for military officers to be members of their parties and military officers, on their side, were eager to play an active role in politics. In this way the 'Movement for Military Reform' became related to liberals such as Yegor Gaidar, Alexander Yakovlev, the retired general Vorobyev, and the movement 'The Military for Democracy' which had members that were the first liberal reformers from the 1988-1991 period. The 'Honor and Motherland' movement became

[337] Vladimir P. Avershev, 'The War in Chechnya: Implications for Military Reform and Creation of Mobile Forces' paper presented at the Conference 'War in Chechnya: Implications for Russian Security Policy' organized by Mikhail Tsypkin at Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California in 1995 and published on the net: http:// www;mis.nps. navy.mil.

[338] It must be noted that this categorization is in some way an oversimplification of reality. Moral and professional considerations do not necessarily exclude each other. Moreover, there was, certainly in the beginning, no sign that hinted at a successful attempt to organize the liberal dissidents. Therefore it is sometimes difficult to speak of a formal group. Finally, not every officer expressed his opinion on this issue. The majority of the officer corps kept their opinion to themselves as an outspoken opinion could be harmful for their military career and could mean the end of the family income.

fuelled the on-going friction among officers. Protected power positions, such as Grachev's ministerial post, not only allowed the holders to engage in corrupt behavior, but compromised reform, as the pursuit of privilege overshadowed sound and coherent management of the department.

Notwithstanding the fact that Grachev's arrival in office started in difficult circumstances and even though it evolved from bad to worse, he proposed an ambitious plan for military reform in July 1992. In an effort to prove his determination to reform the armed forces, he proposed a spectacular plan in which the professional army question was to be one of his primary concerns. In the optimistic first half of the year 1992, some politicians created what Baev called an 'omnipotence complex', which manifested itself in the economic sphere through the implementation of shock therapy. During this time it seemd like everything was possible in all areas of government, and that the most revolutionary perestroika-style ideas still lingered in the political arena.

The plan prescribed military reform activity from 1992 until the year 2000 and it envisaged three phases. The first phase of the plan covered the period 1992-1993 and was mainly a stabilization period in which the Russian military was supposed to take an inventory of men and material and withdrawals from military service would be effectuated. The second phase, foreseen to take place in 1995, would involve reducing the military forces to 2.1 million people, establishing mobile forces (one of Grachev's favorite issues) and reorganizing the Land Forces along a Corps-Brigade structure. The last and third phase, which covered the period of 1995-2000, foresaw the merging of the Air Defense Force and the Strategic Rocket Forces into the Air Force, and as well, the reorganization of the system into Military Districts was proposed. During the final phase of the plan, all redeployment activities would be ended and implemented according to new strategic plans. An essential and favorite point of Grachev's plan was the mobile forces concept, in which the Russian armed forces would be organized along three types of forces according to their state of operational readiness, namely: Constant Readiness Forces (capable of effectively influencing local conflicts); Rapid Deployment Forces (airborne and marine infantry based forces intended mainly to reinforce constant-readiness forces); and Strategic Reserves (to be deployed only during a major crisis or in large-scale wars). This diverse package of measures also foresaw the gradual transition from a conscript army to a professional army.

In the year 2000, Grachev wanted to install a military organization that would recruit 50% professional soldiers (or '*kontraktniki'* as the Russian call them) and 50% conscripted soldiers. In fact the two complementary ideas of mobile forces and the recruitment of *kontraktniki* can be understood as a major impulse to professionalize the Russian armed forces, although the full professionalization of the armed forces was not yet on the agenda. Why was the military prepared for such a concession? Several arguments may be proposed[324]: Firstly, the euphoria of the time played an important role. Russia - as was the perception of the time - stood on the brink of significant changes after the failed August coup. These changes would be guided by the triple concept of 'democratization', 'the introduction of the market economy', and the 'introduction of a professional army'. The Russian liberals tried to endorse these principles in Russian society, because they thought that if Russia would develop along these principles, it would quickly be embraced by the 'civilized, Western world'. The West also participated in this euphoria and subscribed to these principles while simultaneously trying to influence Russia's transformation. This policy, which would later be known as the 'Washington consensus' or as the Russia policy of President Bill Clinton, and especially his Vice president Al Gore, and his advisors (especially Strobe Talbott and Lawrence Summers), was driven by key notions such as democratization, the

[324] Some of these arguments may also be found with A.I. Smirnov, *Rossiya: Na Puti k Professionalnoi armii (opyt, problemy, perspektivy*), Moskva: institut sotsiologii RAN, Tsentr obshchechelovecheskikh tsennostei, 1998, p. 74.

politically related to the party of Lebed and Yuri Skokov, the 'Congress of Russian Communities', which meant that the charismatic and popular general used the 'professionals' for his own political ambitions. Rodionov maneuvered himself into the highest military position by using the general discontent about the Chechen war to his advantage, and in addition he received political support from various 'professionals' and General Lebed.

The professional and intellectual differences between Grachev and Rodionov were exemplified by their individual approaches to the issue of military reform. Using Russian military terminology, it could be said that Grachev represented the idea of the 'reform of the armed forces', while Rodionov represented the more profound idea of 'military reform'. Baranets writes that the different Ministers of Defense represented differences in the 'conceptual schools' of thought on military reform. Rodionov's views were more analytically profound compared with the almost superficial changes that Grachev had proposed. Baranets noted that:

> "Grachev understood military reform as a necessary reduction of military personnel, the movements of troops and army groups, the foundation of the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff of the Russian Federation, the introduction of contract service and a new uniform."

> "Rodionov claimed that the armed forces could not reform itself; that the reform of the armed forces necessarily must be a part of a review of the whole military system of the State…In order to implement Rodionov's concept of reform, the strategy (inclusive all the staff regulations and procedures of the military security of the State), the doctrine, the education of service men, Etc. should be reviewed as a first and preliminary step of reforming the armed forces." [339]

At the end of November 1996, Rodionov published an article in which he discussed the broad outlines of his reform project. [340] This project was discussed on October 4th at the first meeting of the Defense Council and contained the following elements. Firstly, the reform plan aimed at reducing the armed forces to 1.2 million people and it advocated the creation of more flexible and more mobile forces. At the same time, it was suggested that the system of military districts would be revised and several military services and structures would be reorganized. To facilitate a more efficient system of decision making, the plan recommended that a sharper division of responsibilities between the Ministry of Defense and General Staff be created. The plan suggested that the Ministry of Defense should deal with political and management issues, while the General Staff should have operational command of the armed forces which would mean that the role of the General Staff would be strengthened. Moreover, Rodionov applauded the re-establishment of the Defense Council (which would plan military reform) and he proposed that the establishment of a new State Inspectorate (who would monitor the implementation of the plan under the supervision of the president), be appointed.[341]

According to Rodionov, not only did the military forces have to be restructured, but Russia needed to revise its military doctrine as well. The formal plan that Rodionov laid out stressed the

---

[339] Translated from: Viktor Baranets, *op. Cit.*, 1996, p. 501.
[340] Igor Rodionov, 'Kakaya Oborona nuzhna', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, November 29, 1996.
[341] This Military Inspectorate of the president was established in the Fall of 1996. Remarkably enough, this apparatus, which was part of the Presidential Administration and which represented the civilian control over the military, could count on about 100 posts, but which had no chief. Moreover, there was no clearly description of the mission and the tasks this apparatus should perform. The battle between the Ministry of Defense and the MVD that flared up on the appointment of the chief and the exact definition of the mission hollowed this institution out further. The installation of the Military Inspectorate was again an example of how non-efficient institutions were built and, as a result, how hollow political rhetoric was.

importance of an institutionalized decision-making system being created and at the same time he pointed out the analytical errors that his predecessor Grachev had made. Rodionov also underscored the idea that a smaller and more modernized army was needed and this would be the result of qualitative change. Indeed, as Grachev's political paralysis was made clear in 1995, the 'professionals' and the 'moralists' of the military forces, were criticizing him respectively from the political 'right' and the 'left'. Due to their liaison with the movement '*Za Voenuiu Reformu'* from the '1988-1991' wave of democratic reforms, the moralists were adversaries of a more just system of conscription.[342] They demanded that, in the short term, there should be an introduction of alternative service and the right of conscripts to reject service in 'hot spots'. In the long term, they called for the phased ending of conscription and the introduction of a voluntary military service. They made their claim for a professional army complete with a request for structural organizational change aimed at reducing personnel strength and modernizing the armed forces.

The rightist movement '*Chest I Rodina*', of which Igor Rodionov was the main military ideologue, represented another perspective. The ideas of 'Honor and Motherland' may therefore be equated with Rosdionov's view on this issue. Rodionov was never a supporter of the AVF concept, but agreed with the idea of a mixed-manning system. In particular he was a major driving force behind the idea of a professional NCO corps that would replace the system of *praporchshiki* [warrant officers] and the conscripted sergeants. He claimed that the Russian armed forces lacked the small unit leadership essential for success in low intensity operations. Michail Orr synthesized Rodionov's view on the idea of professionalization as follows: "The Ideal for the Russian armed forces in Rodionov's view would be professional officers and NCO's leading and training conscript soldiers."[343]

Based on this view, two remarks may be made. Firstly, it may be said that Rodionov's view on small unit command was correct. Command at the lowest levels of the Russian army was indeed a serious problem, which in turn lay at the bottom of many aspects of Russia's 'soldiers' problem'. Moreover, as politics is 'the art of the possible', Rodionov was wise not to propose a project that would professionalize the military forces in the time frame of only a few years as his predecessor had done. In this sense, the new minister of defense's view on reform issues was more realistic and more balanced than Grachev's was. Secondly, Rodionov proved to be a traditional Soviet officer who placed the armed forces before society (or the state before the individual). This may be illustrated by the fact that he blamed Russian society for the problems related with conscription, rather than the armed forces. Rodionov used the same rhetoric as his Soviet predecessors, and he condemned 'society's moral degeneration, and Russian youth for not considering military service as either prestigious or mandatory. Thus, from a conceptual basis, Rodionov's views could be evaluated as well thought out and profound, however, when he began to implement his plan for reform, Rodionov had several serious problems.

Rodionov began his term in office with a clean-up operation in which he tried to eliminate all the people in the Ministry of Defense and General Staff who were reportedly involved in scandals of corruption. This purging of cadres was carried out in order that the Ministry of Defense would then be considered a credible and legitimate policy making institution. In addition, people who worked for the Ministry of Defense who did not agree with Rodionov's views on reform were fired. In October 1996 this resulted in the retirement of six high-ranking officers, including Colonel General Podkolzin (Commander of the Airborne Forces), Colonel General Vladimir Ivanov

---

[342] It may not be a surprise that, for instance, the movement 'Soldiers' Mothers' of St-Petersburg [Soldatskie Materi Sankt-Peterburga] advocated in major terms the same ideas as the 'For Reform' organization. The Soldiers' Mothers could be placed on the same political side as the 'for Reform' movement. Both organizations organized a seminar in February 2000 in St-Petersburg: 'Vzaimodeistvie grazhdanskogo obshchestva I voennoi organizatsii-garahtiia prav voennosluzhashchich' [The co-operation between civil society and the military organization is the guarantee for the rights of the service men] St. Petersburg, 25-27 February 2000.

[343] Michael Orr, 'Rodionov and Reform', *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, C92, January 1997, p. 5.

(Commander of the Space Forces), Colonel General Mikhail Koleshnikov who was the Chief of the General Staff of the Army and General Viktor Samsonov. Although this was a necessary operation in political terms, it caused severe problems in terms of continuity in the Ministry of Defense. In fact, with the arrival of Rodionov, the General Staff experienced a revival as it performed its traditional role of 'brain of the army' once again, a role that it was ascribed in the 1920s.[344]

Before discussing what Rodionov accomplished in terms of professionalizing the army, it is significant to mention the fact that Yeltsin had, two months before Rodionov came into office, decreed (without consulting the military elite), the abolishment of conscription by the year 2000. This meant that the formal discussion about the principle of professionalization was over before the timeframe of full-professionalization was actually determined. Yeltsin then, unblushingly signed an *ukaz* to comply with the deepest wishes of conscripted soldiers for the abolishment of the conscription system. Nevertheless, this act was a farce for both the skeptical public and the military community. The fact that military thinkers proceeded despite the lack of resolution or recognition of the conscription/professional controversy, illustrated how much the Russian army lacked leadership, how cynical Yeltsin's reign was, and how mercilessly he played with the human considerations of the Russian people.

This presidential decision, however, contrasted with the ministers' ideas on the issue. Therefore Rodionov's first job was to try to postpone or even to get rid of this resolution. Yeltsin gave in rather easily and postponed the implementation of his *ukaz*. In October 1996, Rodionov announced the 'freezing' of the presidential decree until at least 2005. Moreover, he did manage to limit conscription to the armed forces, border guards, internal troops and railway troops. This meant a serious rationalization in the conscription system. Formerly, conscripts could be enlisted in twenty-four different ministries within the Russian state bureaucracy. In other words, Rodionov's first months in office were successful, and in October 1996, he announced a reduction of the armed forces to 1.2 million people by the end of 1997. Nevertheless, it must be said that until this time, reform was only limited to the announcements of projects and in fact these plans were limited to only rhetoric.

Indeed, Rodionov's energetic start sputtered out as he also underwent a process of political and organizational isolation.[345] Politically, Rodionov became more and more ostracized, especially when he lost the support of Aleksandr Lebed in October 1996, who was his most trusted ally in the presidential administration. Moreover, the rise of the new liberal parliamentarians and oligarchs decreased Rodionov's sphere of influence. Consequently, two main adversaries challenged his political operation. Firstly, Yeltsin had created the Defense Council that paralleled the Security Council, which had in principle the major say in matters of military reform. Building a new institution to coordinate military affairs was not a problem for Rodionov, as he advocated the re-installation of a Defense Council himself. The problems originated, however, in the personal antagonism between the Minister of Defense and the ambitious and influential Secretary of the Defense Council Yuri Baturin. As a result, instead of becoming an institute of coordination, the Defense Council became an institute of obstruction. Two strong characters, Rodionov and Baturin fought their bureaucratic battle in public as they tried to obtain the first voice in the ongoing reform debate. The fact that Baturin had personal access to the president, while Rodionov was deliberately refused such contact, meant that the Defense Council was temporarily the most important institution on military reform. This is a strange observation as this institution ignored the Ministry of Defense. Secondly, the rise of the new liberals in the executive, under the leadership of Chubais and Nemtsov, also contributed to the isolation of Rodionov. For the liberals (and the oligarchs) military

[344] Boris. M. Shaposhnikov, *The Brain of the Army*, Moscow: Voenizdatel, 1929.

[345] Many of the arguments which are used here can be read in the political testament Rodionov wrote after his dismissal as minister of defense in May 1997. See: Igor Rodionov, 'problemy voennoj reformy transformiruiutsia v politicheskie spekulatsii. Zaiavlenie eks-ministra oborony RF', *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, Nr 26, 19-25 July 1997.

reform was not a priority, their interests lay in trying to revitalize the Russian economy and they denied the military elite the right to compromise this objective.

The political isolation of Rodionov was the result of the rise of new liberals in the Kremlin at the time of his appointment. However, the dispute between the military theoretician and the civilian economists showed a more fundamental conflict that shared some of the characteristics of the 1988-1991 politico-military debate. This dispute may be illustrated by the following incident that occurred in the fall of 1996. Although an official Ministry of Defense document on military reform was published in October 1996, it was revealed that in December 1996, Baturin used another document as a reference on this topic. Baturin's document represented the Kremlin's view as it was influenced by insights of the president himself, as well as Chubais and Baturin. A brief review of the contents shows the significance of the economic factor in the eyes of the Kremlin. The document proposed that military reform should take place in two stages:

> "The first stage (from 1997-2000) would, according to the economic possibilities of the country, downsize the structure and the organs of the military organization; it would streamline the cooperation between the different ministries and a reorganization of the military districts.
> The second stage (2001-2005) based on the economic prognoses, the military organization would undergo, far reaching structural changes; recruiting would be based on an exclusive contract service; the reserve forces would be reorganized; a streamlining in the system of military education; and the reorganization of the military-industrial complex."[346]

The existence of two reform documents showed two things; Firstly, in terms of management, it may be clear that the effective management of the military reform project was based on two different views, edited by two different political coalitions, which had divided the executive institutions. Secondly, the relevance of the Baturin reform document was not only interesting in terms of the decision-making procedures that it followed, but its contents showed what the liberals of that time thought about military reform.

Although the Baturin document was written in vague terms and based on grand principles, two elements are significant to note. Firstly, the Kremlin sought to find a balance between military organization and economic development as it was clear for the new liberals that economic considerations prevailed over military concerns. Secondly, the idea of the 'zero draft' system was still the ultimate goal of the civilian authorities. It showed that the ridiculed presidential *ukaz* of May 1996, which abolished the system of compulsory military draft, was apparently based on a more persistent conviction than was perceived at the time of its issuing. Indeed, the basic demands of the civilian opposition of the 1988-1991 period reflected the same main ideas as the principles of the Baturin plan, namely the demilitarization of society (and thus a review of state priorities) and the professionalization of the armed forces.[347] Thus Rodionov's fight went further than his personal struggle with Baturin: he was basically confronted with a coalition which stood for a fundamentally different point of view of military reform.

Hence, politically, Rodionov had to spend his time struggling to define his field of competence rather than concentrating on the management of his department. He became extremely disappointed with his isolation and political impotence. Rodionov began to ventilate his frustration in public from January 1997 on, and in fact, he 'blackmailed' the presidential apparatus when he

---

[346] Viktor Baranets, *Genshtab bez tain, kniga pervaia*, Moskva: Politbiuro, 1999, p. 425.

[347] To illustrate this point, Yeltsin repeated his view on the professional army during a televised state-of-the-nation speech on 6 March 1997 in which he announced fundamental decisions on military reform. He stated that an increase of the number of contract/regular soldiers during 2001-2005 and full professionalization after 2005 was the final objective of this reform.

described doomsday scenarios, which could overcome the Russian military in the near future. He predicted an accidental nuclear holocaust, as well as an open mutiny due to a lack of financial means among the military forces. Yeltsin regarded Rodionov's public whining as the complaints of an old and weak man and he did not appreciate Rodionov's position.

Rodionov not only underwent political isolation but internally in the military establishment he had to cope more and more with organizational resistance. Again, it was the elite-corps of the airborne troops who refused to collaborate with the proposed practices of structural reform. In September 1996, Rodionov ordered a major reduction in the airborne forces by over 15,000 people and the public objection of high-ranking airborne officers to these measures resulted in their dismissal. Strangely enough, Rodionov's ally, Lebed, angrily joined the airborne lobby. The airborne resistance was only one example of how the military forces rejected their minister as further reductions in the land forces were also foreseen.

According to his plan, Rodionov tried to reduce the total strength of 60 divisions to 12 fully manned divisions and 12 cadre divisions. Moreover, the implementation of the 1996 reform plan would have cost the jobs of about 500 generals. It is doubtful that this massive, but necessary, reduction would be accepted by all portions of the army and the General Staff itself. Once again, every single officer paid lip service to the necessity of reform, but nobody wanted to make sacrifices for it. In other words, there was no general organizational consensus on what a reform plan should contain and what outcomes could be considered as reasonable and bearable consequences. In January 1997, Rodionov still had Yeltsin's support and he was appointed, quite artificially, to the post of the first Civil Minister of Defense of Russia. Indeed, as the Minister of Defense changed his military uniform for a civilian suit when he reached the age of retirement in December 1996, he was invited by Yeltsin to continue his efforts to implement reform in the military forces. Five months later, however on May 22nd 1997, he was fired together with the Chief of Staff, General Samsonov. The new liberal politicians convinced Yeltsin to get rid of Rodionov's dissident voice in the executive, which was dominated by the new flair-up of wide reform intentions. In this way, during the first half of the year 1997, the new liberals achieved total control of the executive.

The military lobby that Rodionov represented proved to be a politically powerless pressure group for at least two reasons. Firstly, the highest representative of the military in the executive proved to be a poor player in the political game because he did not enjoy the trust and the support of the executive. Rodionov did not understand the rules of this political game nor did he have the personal qualities that would make him part of this specific (presidential) game. In the end, perhaps Rodionov was too much of a professional soldier for this precarious game of Machiavellian intrigue. Secondly, the Minister of Defense could not unite the military elite and the general forces behind his project. Therefore he could not create enough momentum, space or time within his own organization to impose the far-reaching global changes that he had in mind. In this sense, the plan of the military theoretician moved beyond the provincial thinking of his colleagues. On the other hand, Rodionov's plan was in some ways a 'utopian' model, which did not take into consideration the social context that the military forces lived in. Rodionov, thus, found himself in a no win situation from the start of his ministerial adventure, an environment in which he acted in a political vacuum between vying politicians and military leaders. This is a tragic fate for a talented general who had the best intentions and the highest possible recommendations for the job of Ministry of Defense. In addition to his personal political drama, Rodionov's faith in his military reform project illustrated that the real obstacle to saving Russia's armed forces, was politics.

The Sergeyev Period (March 1997). When Rodionov and Samsonov were both fired on May 22nd 1997, they were replaced respectively by Igor Sergeyev and Viktor Chechevatov. They would survive the Yeltsin era, which is a considerable achievement in the unstable political context of Russia in 1997-1999. Thus it was Sergeyev who introduced the last effort to implement the Russian

military reform plan during the Yeltsin era. Sergeyev was not a well known general in the military forces, although he commanded the Strategic Rocket Forces before his appointment to the position of Minister of Defense. However, the unexpected arrival of Sergeyev onto the political scene in Russia can be explained by his relationship to the issue of nuclear weapons and the underlying attitude of military conservatism. On two different occasions Rodionov made decisions from which Sergeyev profited. Firstly, Rodionov used the tactic of 'nuclear blackmail' in his bureaucratic battle with the Presidential Administration, which proved to be a politically questionable move. Secondly, Rodionov supported the wrong political party in the debate on the position of nuclear weapons in the Russian security doctrine. Sergeyev profited from these mistakes and he received an opportunity to maneuver himself into the highest circles of the executive.

Rodionov warned of the dangers of inadequate resources in the nuclear forces, that there was unreliable personnel, and that there were extensive problems in the techniques and weapon systems that were used in the nuclear branch of the forces. In this way he tried to put the president, the government and the presidential administration under pressure. In fact Rodionov's move can be labeled as nuclear blackmail as a disaster was 'guaranteed' if sufficient resources were not supplied to the military forces.[348] The impact of this nuclear blackmail, however, was not well calculated and had some unexpected consequences. Firstly, nuclear safety issues were (and are) extremely sensitive in the international arena and easily alarmed the Western public. Consequently, Western governments were seriously alarmed by this point and put the Russian president under pressure to clarify the status of Russia's nuclear arsenal. Rodionov had chosen the weapon of the Cold War for his battle, which was clearly a tool of blackmail in the international arena, but not for internal national political skirmishes.

Secondly, Rodionov officially exposed Russia's weaknesses by publicly stating that the military's nuclear installations were unreliable, and this subsequently tarnished Russia's international prestige and status. These statements compromised Rodionov's place in the executive, and it was clear that the Kremlin had to do something about this and to deny the scare tactics that were issued by its own Minister of Defense. Rodionov counted too much on the passivity of his political adversaries and in this way he underestimated them. Thirdly, and politically the most significant factor was that, Rodionov indirectly launched an attack on the competence of Sergeyev, the commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces. Sergeyev received Rodionov's statements as a professional insult. Sergeyev understood that Rodionov was implying that he could not maintain control over the security of the nuclear forces, therefore he loudly and publicly denied Rodionov's 'accusations' and consequently this public denial made Sergeyev a potential ally to the Kremlin.

In February 1997, Yeltsin reacted to Rodionov's attack and he ordered an inspection tour of the nuclear forces and its weapons, to be completed by his Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and the Commander of the Strategic Rocket Forces. In this way he tried to silence Rodionov and attempted to calm the outside world's concerns about Russia's nuclear insecurity. Politically, however, this inspection tour had significant consequences. It provided Sergeyev with an opportunity to establish personal contacts with the close circle of Yeltsin's trustees and Baturin for instance, applauded Sergeyev who, in the opinion of the secretary of the Defense Council, managed his force outstandingly and thriftily, but most importantly without (public) complaints. This was a clear sign that Sergeyev earned the trust of the president, which was the key to being nominated to the highest military post. In conclusion, Rodionov's nuclear blackmail was a clumsy political move as it compromised his own position as well as bringing in a new candidate for his post, to the surface. He politically chose the wrong tactics (which was 'blackmail'), he chose the wrong subject (which was 'nuclear safety') and he miscalculated the political reactions to this threat, especially in his own organization, which he thought was still the monolithic and obedient organization of the Soviet period.

[348] Grachev did in fact the same as he said no reform in case of not enough funding. However, Grachev did not explicitly use the nuclear disaster scenario to give his threat more impact.

Sergeyev and Rodionov also stood in opposition to one another in the START debate. Despite the fact that Yeltsin agreed to sign the treaty with his American counterpart George Bush, he could not pass the treaty through the Duma. This was first and foremost a consequence of the hostile relationship between Yeltsin and the parliament. Hence Russia's political dichotomy also caused a stalemate on the nuclear issue and in the broader security debate. The START debate also divided the military and security community on more fundamental considerations. Indeed, the whole community agreed on the fact that Russia's strategic defense and Russia's place in the world community relied almost completely on nuclear weapons. Russia's conventional force weaknesses promoted the nuclear weapons to first place in Russia's security concerns, however, it was rather the question of how to ensure Russia's deterrence capability that divided the community. In general terms, conservative generals (e.g. Rodionov, Lebed, Rokhlin) supported by the Communist and nationalist parties thought that Russia could ensure its international position by keeping the existing arsenal functioning. However more progressive people advocated that only through the reduction and the modernization of Russia's nuclear arsenal, could Russia's nuclear capacity in the world be assured. Sergeyev, liberal parties (e.g. Yabloko), the president and his administration supported this second view.

It was clear that both parties had different views on the ratification of START, as a reduction in the nuclear arsenal holdings meant for the conservatives that Russia was getting weaker, while more liberal parties saw this as an opportunity to strengthen Russia's nuclear capacity. The logic of the nuclear debate added another element of fragmentation to the military officer corps and meant that Sergeyev and Rodionov were again on opposing sides of the political debate. The fact that this political difference was translated into the struggle between political parties (liberals against nationalists and communists) and political institutions (the executive against the legislative) meant that the relationship between Rodionov and Sergeyev had important political consequences. The replacement of Rodionov with Sergeyev is an outward manifestation of this phenomenon.

Sergeyev was, when he became the Ministry of Defense, a rather colorless general whose professional record did not show any remarkable elements. Russian as well as Western analysts saw him as a spineless and opportunistic general who was ready to subscribe to the program of the Government and Presidential Administration. In this context, Baranets bitterly quoted Sergeyev when the new Minister of Defense said to Yeltsin just after his appointment: "Vse vashchi ukazaniia budut bezuslovno vypolneny" [All your decrees will unconditionally be implemented]. [349] This was a sign for Baranets that Sergeyev was a pawn of Yeltsin, rather then a strong character who would defend the military forces' interests.

The unenthusiastic comments on Sergeyev's arrival onto the political scene must, however, be placed in the political context of that moment, as it is not necessarily an accurate picture of Sergeyev's political abilities. Indeed, from an *a posteriori* point of view, it is clear that the 'spineless' general had more political insight (and good luck) than his predecessor as he proved to be able to survive in an extremely unstable political environment. Moreover, the prudent and patient general succeeded in endorsing a program of modernization of the nuclear weapons arsenal. The so-called TOPOL-M program, intended to modernize the Strategic Rocket Forces and an expression of technological innovation may be seen as an example of Sergeyev's endorsement of his personal plan which succeeded in promoting the Nuclear Rocket Force to a higher position of prestige in the military forces. Despite the fact that this may be seen as another example of 'provincial thinking' (promoting its own services over that of other services), it showed at the same time that a program of modernization was finally endorsed. This may be catalogued as an example of successfully managing a reform plan. The fact that Sergeyev was apparently misunderstood and in a way

[349] Viktor Baranets*, Genshtab bez tain, kniga pervaia*, Moskva: Politbiuro, 1999, p. 435.

underestimated by Western analysts needs more attention, as it is an illustration of the endemic analytical misconceptions and miscalculations of both the USSR and Russia.[350]

Sergeyev's view on reform and the professional army and the obstacles he met during his period in office under Yeltsin were intensified by Yeltsin who put the new military team under pressure by giving a short term dateline to produce a new reform plan by July 25th 1997. After only one month and a half in office, Sergeyev publicly outlined his vision on military reform. On July 16 Yeltsin issued four presidential decrees which underscored Sergeyev's plan.

The main emphasis of the reform plan lay on administrative reorganization and downsizing. The most important elements were the following. Firstly, the Russian army would reduce the number of services, instead of having the Soviet structure of five services (Ground Forces, Navy, Air Force, Air Defense Forces, and Strategic Rocket Forces), the Russian army would evolve in the long run into a traditional three-service military (Ground, Sea, and Air Forces), and on short notice the merging between the Air and Air Defense Forces would be accomplished.[351] Secondly, the number and nature of Military Districts would be changed from the eight existing MD's, to the Russian army being divided along four MD's: Moscow, North Caucasus, Urals and Far East. The commanders of each of the MD's would thus have operational command of all the forces in his theater. Thirdly, military manpower would be cut by 500,000 people to 1.2 million people and the central administration would be limited to 1 percent of total military manpower and, for instance, the number of generals would be reduced by 22% (at that moment the Russian army had more then 1,900 generals). To achieve this goal, many officers had to be retired. Fourthly, the Ministry of Defense would be freed from non-military tasks such as construction work and agricultural aid. Fifthly, the number of military educational establishments would be cut from 103 to 57.

Besides these initial reforms ideas, Sergeyev announced other initiatives, which the General Staff was working on. Yeltsin on the other hand made new promises to protect the social and living conditions of the military forces. He pledged to pay all back wages by September 1st and he promised to build 100,000 new apartments for discharged military men. In this way Yeltsin tried to win the support of the military forces for the new reform impetus.

Although the idea of professionalization was not forgotten and in fact was still explicitly on the reform agenda, it had no priority in the short term. The abolishment of conscription was postponed for an indefinite time and the lack of financial resources for the forces was again used to motivate this decision. In the mean time, Sergeyev proposed to rationalize the conscription system and to save what remained of the collapsed conscription system. Two decisions in particular may be used to illustrate this policy.

Firstly, Sergeyev proposed to limit the number of ministries competing for conscript manpower from 14 to 5,[352] which meant that conscript soldiers could only serve in the army, the Interior Troops, the Border Guards, railroad troops and FAPSI (*federal'noe agenstvo pravitel'stvennoi svjazi I informatsii pri Prezidente Rossijskoi Federatsii* or Federal Agency for

[350] The elaboration of this item refers to the discussion that started after the dissolvent of the USSR and the analytical, academic world on Soviet/Russian affairs underwent a crisis as they saw their lack of understanding and insight into Soviet/Russian affairs. The misinterpretation of Sergeyev may be an illustration of the fact that not much changed concerning our knowledge of Russian affairs and in fact that the analytical world has to permanently rethink its own methodology, and, most of all, needs a more critical attitude towards its own analysis. See for this discussion for instance the special issue of The National Interest: 'The Strange Death Of Soviet Communism', *The National Interest*, Nr. 31, Spring 1993; and Michael Cox (Editor), *Rethinking the Soviet Collapse, Sovietology, the Death of Communism and the New Russia*, London: Pinter, 1998.

[351] An alternative three-service military is proposed which make the distinction between Strategic Missile Forces (Strategic Rocket Forces, Military Space Forces, Anti-Ballistic Missile Defenses, and Long Range aviation); Deterrence Forces (Air Defense forces and same Air Force and Navy units), and General Purpose Forces (Ground Forces and units from air force and Navy).This perception of the three-service military is based on functional considerations.

[352] This is an amendment on the 'law on military service' of 2 April 1998.(See: O Voinskoi obiazannosti I voennoi sluzhba, federal'nyi zakon of 28 March 1998)

Government Communications and Information).[353] Secondly, he announced the re-introduction of the system of military education in the secondary schools in order to prepare potential conscripts for military service. This policy was a well-known Soviet practice and indicated that *de facto* the whole conscription debate found itself back at its original stage in 1988-89. Based on these observations, it can be said that the idea of the AVF was perhaps not forgotten, but it was now seen as a long-term objective for the military forces.

The de-prioritization of the AVF idea, due to the lack monetary resources, meant in practical terms that it was no longer a valuable alternative for the Russian armed forces. On the contrary, instead of modernizing the Russian military, some conservative reactions emerged and the militarization of Russian society was (again) back on track. In August 1998 when the Russian economy collapsed, the fate of the professional army under Yeltsin was sealed and Sergeyev's view on reform, which showed an ambivalent attitude towards modernization of the armed forces, was restricted and therefore not a coherent view on change. Firstly, Sergeyev advocated that modernizing the forces was crucial and that the quality rather than the quantity of resources was an important factor especially concerning the promotion of technological innovation in the nuclear debate. These objectives were met by some degree by the signing of the START treaty, the endorsement of the TOPOL-M program, and the demonstration of the strategic exercise ZAPAD 99, where the nuclear aspect of Russian warfare received preponderate attention. On the other hand, he did not take the conscription issue into consideration when he revealed his 'philosophy of modernization' of the armed forces, on the contrary, he demonstrated that his attitudes about the conscription-professionalization debate were similar to those of the Soviet era.

Secondly, downsizing and the administrative reorganization of the forces as they are presented in Sergeyev's reform proposal were not the result of the implementation of the idea of 'intensive growth' or modernization, apparently Sergeyev's idea of quantity stood still in proportion to efficiency, which is in contradiction to 'third wave modernization'. Sergeyev's position was therefore an expression of necessity rather than of choice in the sense that it was not an expression of fundamental change in the military elite's mentality. Thirdly, in prioritizing the modernization of the nuclear forces over personnel and recruitment issues, Sergeyev proved that he had a conservative Soviet-Russian attitude. In other words, fundamental thinking about personnel management did not evolve proportionally with technological innovation. Politically this instrumental thinking is an expression of a typical Russian-Soviet attitude that always put state interests above individual rights. This attitude stands in complete opposition to the idea of Human Resource Management, one of the pillars on which the AVF idea is based in the Western reading of the concept. In order to be efficient, human resource management has to take technological innovation and individual human rights into consideration.

This ambivalent and restricted view on the modernization debate contained one danger, the available resources of the military forces were disproportionally used on Sergeyev's plan for nuclear modernization. In this sense the attitude that was observed demonstrated that the professionalization issue was not so much a problem of resources, but rather a problem of prioritization. Professionalization of the forces was simply not a priority for the Russian military high command. In this way it may be logical that conservative reflexes and a return to Soviet traditions was the only solution to save what remained of the conscription system.

The fact that Sergeyev was urged to present a program in such a short period of time suggests that military reform became a priority for the President and his Administration. Yeltsin himself came up with some solutions, which included paying overdue wages, and by ordering a new housing program to be created for military personnel. Sergeyev, on the other hand was extremely active during the summer and fall of 1997 in order to show Russians that his reform plan was on track. During this period of time, he undertook an inspection tour of all the military's services and

[353] FAPSI is one of the two internal successor organizations to the KGB. The other is the FSB (Federal Security Service).

many military units all over the country. This tour was actually a campaign that he embarked upon to win support for his reform plan and to gather information on the daily problems of the military forces. When he was touring Sergeyev spoke preferentially with mid-level officers, as he knew that their support was crucial for the successful implementation of his plan.

Besides this action, the military Procurator General was encouraged to renew his efforts to fight corruption in the military forces and to examine the problems of abuse that conscript soldiers were experiencing. This renewed attempt to fight intolerable behavior in the army had some spectacular results as some corrupt generals were publicly prosecuted and soldiers and officers involved in the abuse of soldiers were put on trial. However, besides some initial spectacular actions, soon these efforts to root out corruption in the system lost their momentum. Notwithstanding this, the Kremlin and the Ministry of Defense made a considerable effort to win the hearts and minds of the military forces because there was a sustained resistance to reform. As soon as Sergeyev's July program was made public and it became clear that it was again a Kremlin machination, an open and aggressive reaction surfaced among military personnel which was led by General Lev Rokhlin, the Secretary of the Defense Committee.[354] This general had made considerable efforts to influence military reform from the legislative branch since he had been elected as a member of parliament during the December 1995 Duma elections.[355] The fact that he had no impact on the process of military reform himself and Sergeyev did, urged him to publish an open letter in which he accused the president of incompetence and he called upon the military community to stage an open rebellion that protested against the further deprivation of the forces

Rokhlin subsequently tried to organize the military elite into an oppositional organization called: 'the All-Russian Movement in Support of the Army, the Defense Industry and Military Science (*Dvizhenie v pdderzhku armii, oboronnoy promyshlennosti I voennoy nauki-DPA*). The founding Congress of the organization took place on September 20th 1997 and was attended by over 1000 people. Prominent military attendees were Igor Rodionov, Alexander Lebed, Aleksandr Korzhakov, Albert Makashov, and the former head of KGB Vladimir Kriutshchov and Valentin Varennikov who were prominent members of the 1991 coup. Other well-known anti-constitutional officers who attended the meeting were Vladimir Achalov and Stanislav Terekhov. Besides these famous military leaders, the Russian Nationalists Vladimir Zhirinovski and Viktor Iliuchin, and Communists such as Gennadi Zyuganov were in attendance. Thus, the traditionally conservative forces of Russia supported Rokhlin and his movement, which was regarded as a military led anti-regime action.

The fact that over fifty local branches of the DPA were quickly organized and that Rokhlin predicted a 'hot political autumn' and even the resignation (or abdication) of Yeltsin, showed that his opposition movement had an influential start. Once again, an anti-reform movement that originated within the military forces blocked a new impetus of military reform. As a result, military reform remained a subject that divided society or, depending on the perspective one takes, the political opposition parties used the military elite's lack of consensus on military reform, in their battle against the Yeltsin regime. Therefore, military reform once again took off in an extremely unstable and polarized organizational and political setting.

Rokhlin's movement however, despite the flamboyant start, was not very successful. Two reasons can be cited to explain this. Firstly, Rokhlin tried to set up a broad military opposition that

---

[354] Indeed, the plan was proposed and accepted by the Kremlin without any influence from the parliament or other institutions. There was a direct and personal line between Sergeyev (Ministry of Defense), Chernomyrdin –Chubais and Yeltsin that meant that reform, at least on paper, was conceptualized and excepted by the executive in a time lapse of only a few weeks.

[355] On 8 July, Lev Rokhlin, for instance, had sent a law proposal to the Presidential Administration from the parliamentary committee on defense which could legally cover military reform. This proposal, however, was completely neglected by the President. This neglect for the legislative branch, a constant in Yeltsin's policy, severely frustrated Rokhlin. (see: Joachim Schmidt-Skipiol, 'Lew Rochlin, Ein General Rebelliert', Aktuelle Analysen, Nr. 50/1997, Koln: *Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien*, 14th November 1997, p. 2.

contained not only military men, but also all the people who in one way or another were affected by the military forces. Rokhlin essentially tried to mobilize discontented people in the military-industrial complex, military pensioners and families of the military (potentially 20 million people). However, Olson's theory of collective action-expressed in the paradox of collective action theory, predicts that the organization of such a large group in order to obtain a collective good, namely the improvement of social living conditions for the military, is extremely difficult. Olson claims that:

> "If the members of a large group rationally seek to maximize their personal welfare, they will not act to advance their common or group objectives unless there is coercion to force them to do so, or unless some separate incentive, distinct from the achievement of the common or group interest, is offered to the members of the group individually on the condition that they help bear the costs or burdens involved in the achievement of the group objectives. Nor will such large groups form organizations to further their common goals in the absence of the coercion or the separate incentives just mentioned. These points hold true even when there is unanimous agreement in a group about the common good and the methods of achieving it."[356]

It was an illusion that Rokhlin's status as a general and the dissatisfaction among the military community could succeed in organizing and mobilizing military people and their civilian relations to overthrow Yeltsin's regime. Status, prestige and a common goal are not enough to motivate 'rational people' to take collective action. In another context James Sherr states that:

> "…strong instincts, high popularity, executive power and a dedicated executive team do not guarantee success or even progress. In Russia public support is at least as mercurial as it is elsewhere. Loss in confidence can also transform a disciplined elite into a cynical one-and submissive people into plotters."[357]

Secondly, Rokhlin's movement was related politically with the conservatives, in particular with the Communist forces of society. This alliance compromised the DPA movement over time and eventually Lebed, a long time ally of Rokhlin, felt the heat of Rokhlin's political influence and popularity. Lebed recognized the danger of his alliance with Rokhlin and for the sake of his own political career, very soon after the founding meeting of the DPA movement Lebed and Rokhlin became political enemies. Moreover, Rokhlin's alliance with Zyuganov was too one-dimensional to gather all the military's discontents and Sven Gunnar Simonsen pointed out that "the military men themselves at the most recent [1995] parliamentary elections cast their votes along much more complex patterns than those Rokhlin was betting on."[358]

In conclusion, Rokhlin- as his colleagues did before him- launched himself into politics acting like a military commander. He did not understand the complexity of political affairs, as he simplistically identified Russia's fate with that of its army and he was unable to fully understand the political diversity of the armed forces. The murder of Rokhlin, on July 3rd 1998, sealed the fate of the DPA movement, and it soon became a non-event in Russian politics. With the death of Rokhlin, another attempt to organize the military forces to protest against the regime collapsed, nevertheless it distracted the attention of the Kremlin and the Ministry of Defense from its core function in military affairs, which was namely reforming the armed forces.

---

[356] Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action, Public Gods and the Theory of Groups*, London: Harvard University Press, 1977 (Seventh edition), 1977, p. 2.
[357] James Sherr, 'A New Regime? A new Russia?' *Occasional report No 35*, Monitoring Foreign and Security Policy in Ukraine- Center for Peace, Conversion and Foreign Policy of Ukraine, 15 July 2000, p. 7.
[358] Sven Gunnar Simonsen, 'Rokhlin Enters the Political Fray', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, January 1998, p. 17.

Indeed, the open rebellion of a broad but loosely bound coalition in the summer of 1997 urged the president to make another personnel shuffle in his government. Kokoshin was the only civilian who had survived in the Russian Ministry of Defense since the founding of the Russian armed forces in 1992 and he now replaced Baturin as secretary of the Defense Council. Kokoshin was in any case, more generally accepted and professionally appreciated by the military elite than Baturin was. A few months later a new institutional change made Kokoshin the most important man in military affairs in the presidential administration as the Inspector General as well as the person presiding over the Security Council, which had at the same time incorporated the functions of the Defense Council.

This reorganization seemed to be a good move and during the first half of 1998 many observers remained relatively optimistic about the fate of military reform. However, the shock of the financial collapse of August 1998 sealed the fate of military reform under the Yeltsin regime. The musical chairs of five Prime Ministers in the eighteen months following August 1998, did not create the necessary calm and governmental cohesion that is needed to implement military reform. Sergeyev succeeded in implementing his own, personal 'nuclear program', but there was not enough resources to implement a total reform of the military forces, or to introduce an all-volunteer force into the system. On the contrary, Sergeyev had to rely on old, well-known and cheap practices to find a solution to the manpower problem. In fact, the 1997 effort to install reform in manpower affairs completely failed, instead, the existing situation deteriorated hopelessly. By the end of the Yeltsin era, Pavel Felgenhauer described the manpower situation as follows: "The military forces have disintegrated into a mass of men that walk around in uniforms but cannot be sent into battle under any circumstances."[359]

Based on these observations, some general conclusions can be made about the military reform efforts that were made by Sergeyev's ministry. Firstly, it was only after Yeltsin himself decided that reform was a priority for the executive that it became a priority in reality. More accurately, it was only in the light of Yeltsin's need to ensure his own political survival that it became a policy priority at all. Yeltsin 'pyramidal political construction' was thus also applicable to the practice of military reform. Secondly, military reform was a one-dimensional project inspired by personnel force-related motives, rather then a generally coherent reform view. The modernization proposal thus became a fragmented and manipulated project, instead of a comprehensive process. Military reform was subsequently, just like Russian political practice in general, a personified process. As Yeltsin and his close circle of allies trusted Sergeyev, he was able to implement his program. In other words, the professional background of the Minister (just as Grachev demonstrated with his 1992-1996 Mobile Forces project) was a fundamental determinant in the way reform developed.

Thirdly, there was a great internal resistance from the military forces themselves to Sergeyev's attempts at reform, hence, military cohesion was thus a non-existent entity. In other words, the military elite could not draft a reform plan that could rely on some kind of organizational consensus. The diversity and the complexity of the bureaucratic interests of the forces prevented this from happening. On fundamental issues, such as for instance the nuclear-strategic balance, there was no consensus in the armed forces and on the contrary, the lack of consensus triggered a fierce bureaucratic battle that strangled military competence and efficiency.

Lastly, the deeply divided political arena (between the executive and the legislative branches of the government, between the 'liberal forces' and the red-brown opposition of the parliament, between Yeltsin and his small circle of trustees against the rest of the political forum and society), generated conflict on several different levels and all groups used the issue of military reform to fight their struggle. Some generals and colonels tried to influence this battle, which meant that the lines between political struggle and internal military conflicts were not clear. Thus, a lack of consensus, fierce and counterproductive bureaucratic incompetence, and individual ambition placed above

[359] Pavel Felgenhauer, 'Reform of Military a Sham', *Moscow Times*, 14th September 2000. Webedition: www.themoscowtimes.com.

generally accepted plans of reform, were manifested under the leadership of Sergeyev. Other external causes such as Russia's financial collapse and the unpredictable political scene of Yeltsin's last year in office, sealed the fate of military reform under Yeltsin: in other words it failed dramatically.

The Concept of a Professional Army under Yeltsin: an Evaluation

Soon after Yeltsin came into power in the Russian Federation, the executive branch re-monopolized the reform discussion. Sporadically there were some voices in the newspapers (e.g. Lopatin, Lobov, Goltz,) in the scientific journals (e.g. A. Arbatov), or in non-governmental organizations (e.g. Soldiers' Mothers, Memorial) on military reform, but these voices faded away as time passed. Civil society, the academic world (except perhaps the *sovet po venshnei i oboronoi politike* [the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy]) and the legislative branch of the government were all systemically excluded from the specific reform debate. This observation not only made civilian supervision over military affairs highly questionable, but it made the discussion also univocal and therefore less 'rich'. It was Yeltsin, and only he, who determined the players and the rules of the game: but his orchestration of the events was uneven and incoherent and it was related to his personal character and his own power struggles within the Kremlin. Only when it was politically necessary - when his power position was questioned - did he address the 'military' problem. His actions were most of the time impulsive and therefore unrealistic and impractical and as a result, Yeltsin gave no clear guidelines to the military forces and its organizational future.

Other important players in the reform debate were in order of importance: the Presidential Administration (in which the Security and Defense Council were incorporated), the government, and finally the military elite themselves. It must be stressed however that the military elite did not have a voice in the debates, as they were not allowed into Yeltsin's inner-circle of decision-making politicians. The military leaders, were given several reform programs under three different Ministers of Defense, and they kept the AVF discussion on the reform agenda, but not wholeheartedly. Instead of regarding the AVF idea as a concept that could be applied to the armed forces, their discussions about reform were confined to theoretical debates rather than debates about immediate practical action. Different arguments can be used to explain this situation:

Firstly, the military elite was convinced that the financial-economic situation of the country did not allow them to select the AVF as a possible reform model. Although they experimented with contract service, the elite was soon disillusioned with the results since only undesirable candidates wished to become professional soldiers. Moreover, as soon as these *kontraktniki* left the service, when it became clear that the job was not well paid and they were not well equipped, the military elite realized that AVF did not correspond with the short term socio-economic conditions of Russia.

Secondly, there was great resistance to the principle of the AVF itself since many officers simply did not accept the idea of replacing conscript soldiers with professional ones. This attitude cannot be underestimated and it was derived from and was coterminous with both the tactical and strategic thinking of the Russian military and the entire discussion of human relations in the Russian military forces. In Chechnya for example, many officers were still thinking in a classical military terms and practicing traditional forms of warfare in which no tactical adjustments were made to accommodate the new types of warfare that the forces were experiencing. Traditionally Second World War thinking still dominated the tactical thinking of the Russian officer corps and moreover, the non-responsibility of the officer corps for the lives of their subordinates was another outcome of that same mentality. For many officers the limitless use of soldier 'fodder' in the ranks remained an indisputable feature of their profession and the AVF idea undermined or at least questioned this mentality. On the other hand the leadership could not simply waste a highly educated and trained soldier who cost the organization a great deal of money, time and effort. Sticking to the old Soviet

idea of the mass army was not only much cheaper and easier, but it was embedded in their professional 'genes' as it were.

Thirdly, and perhaps more importantly, there were bureaucratic arguments that made the AVF proposal only a topic for discussion. The introduction of more mobile, compact and modernized armed forces into Russian society would create deep cuts and effect a profound reorganization of several branches of the forces, which subsequently could cause a certain degree of organizational resistance. Even the Ministers of Defense, albeit to different degrees, could not resist endorsing a plan that favored the forces and branches that they originated from. A 'provincial' kind of thinking among the Ministry of Defense resulted in each one favoring its own force or branch line. The opposite attitude, however, was necessary in order to endorse the AVF idea, which would have a profound effect on the Russian armed forces. The fact that military managers were bad politicians and sometimes openly corrupt, added other elements to a political scene in which organizational change was very difficult.

Although the AVF proposal was never a concrete reform option, it must be underlined that the idea was sometimes prominent at certain moments. In 1992-1993 and in 1996-1997 for instance the AVF plan seemed to be taken more seriously than during the remainder of the Yeltsin era. Grachev joined the euphoric mood that reigned over the country in 1992, while the Yeltsin election of 1996, and the energetic policy of the new liberals in 1997, gave a second impulse to the discussion. However, as soon, as military planning met reality, the idea quickly received less energetic support, if it was not already completely abandoned. In this sense, the AVF idea underwent the same fate as other major reform plans such as the introduction of the market economy and democratic reform. Perhaps major reforms do not follow the logic of the 'omnipotent grand design' as many might believe and in fact profound societal and organizational changes are more likely to be the result of a long term process of trial and error and many parallel and cumulative decisions instead of one major rational exercise in decision-making.

In conclusion there were political, bureaucratic, conceptual and practical reasons why the AVF project was only a 'concept of the future' and never a concrete reform option during the Yeltsin era. Yeltsin courted and patronized the military elite in its political game while he effectively muzzled their professionalism. Conversely military leaders were eager players in the presidential game, but they were unskilled politicians who did not understand the rules of the political game. Not only were they not allowed to directly participate and were sidelined from the political playing field, military leaders were ineffective players themselves and as a result they were unsuccessful advocates for the military lobby in the political arena. In addition the Russian military forces were internally heavily fragmented, thus as an organization, the military forces was lacking in social and political cohesion. During this time frame the military forces did not have a charismatic leader who combined both expertise with organizational power and who could build a conceptual consensus in both the military and political high command. [360] This meant that parties, the civilian leadership and the military high command (who most of the time blamed the extra-military world for the malaise in its organization and used this as an excuse not to take responsibility for it) were responsible for the failure to install the AVF proposal. Strangely enough, this brings the analysis on decision making back to its starting point. Indeed, organizational change starts theoretically with an honest and open evaluation of an organization's problems: the Russian military elite did not even meet this condition. In this way another vicious circle was established which could only be broken by external factors, factors which could change the players and the rules of the game.

In order to test the decision making models that were outlined in the beginning of Part II, I can make the following remarks. Under Yeltsin's rule, there were no discussions about the status of

[360] Expertise and organizational power are both necessary conditions to make decision on and implement change. See: Geert Hofstede*, Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind, Intercultural Cooperation and its Importance for Survival*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997, pp. 200-203.

the AVF because neither a comprehensive, nor a bounded rational debate was permitted. Yeltsin's method of monopolizing power relations prevented the Carnegie coalition model of decision making from developing. Yeltsin's opportunistic and politically functional approach to military affairs, made even the incremental decision making model impossible. The fact that we cannot apply these models shows that the political insitutinalization process and the political culture of the system forgoes the decision making process. In Part III of this thesis, I will focus on the debate that surrounds military organizational culture.